History Of The Church To A.D. 325 (1907)

H. N. Bate

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History of the Church

TO A.D. 325

BY

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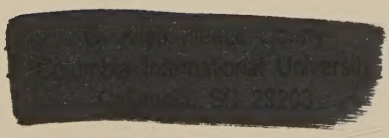

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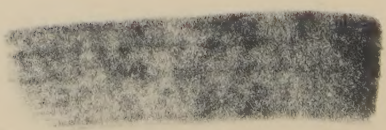

PREFACE

In preparing the following history, it has been found necessary to omit all mention of some important subjects; but it is hoped that no gap has been left which will not be filled up in other volumes of this series. Thus a fuller account of doctrine will be found in *Early Christian Doctrine*, the origin of the ministry will be described in *The Church, its Ministry and Authority*, the formation of the New Testament in *An Introduction to the New Testament*.

The author wishes to point out that it is possible for English readers to acquaint themselves with the original sources of early Church history by using Professor Gwatkin's valuable *Selections from Early Christian Writers*.

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CHURCH HISTORY TO A.D. 325

CHAPTER I

THE ROMAN WORLD AND THE JEWISH RELIGION

THE foundation and early growth of the Christian Church can be studied directly in the work of contemporary Christian writers: of these only one, S. Luke, composed a narrative: the rest of the New Testament helps us only by references and allusions to the life of the body for which it was written. But the reader of S. Luke's 'second treatise' will find that Christian books do not by themselves enable him to form a complete or intelligible picture of early Church life. For, first, the Church was planted on Jewish soil by Jews: its doctrines were carried round the Jewish world and came into conflict with Jewish ways of thinking and customary law; and its preachers were not at first understood to be propagating anything more than a peculiar form of the Jewish faith.

Again, the whole of the history which the 'Acts' relates took place within the boundaries of one secular power. When the peace of Jerusalem was broken by Jewish religious disturbances, the offence was against Roman administrative law: when S. Paul travelled as a missionary, he passed over Roman roads, along the highways of Roman commerce, under the protection of the Roman franchise. There were of course other points at which the new doctrine came into contact with the pagan world: we find it exciting the wonder or

hatred of Asiatics in Lycaonia and at Ephesus, or stimulating the curiosity of philosophers at Athens; but the only two great external forces with which it had to reckon were the Jewish religion and the Roman empire. The importance of the former was destined to diminish and pass away, and that of the latter to increase and remain; and therefore it is natural for the Christian history of the Church to start with an account of the Roman world.

The Roman Empire.—In the first century of our era, the Roman State was the unquestioned source of law and justice for all the countries which bordered upon or had direct communication with the Mediterranean Sea, from the Euphrates in the east to the Atlantic, and from the Weser in the north to the African desert. Within these limits, which are only a rough approximation to the lines of the imperial frontier, Roman soldiers or magistrates maintained a unity of law and administration which adapted itself successfully to the varying needs of civilised or semi-barbarous regions. The imperial roads, serving as channels alike for the passage of troops, the promotion of trade, or the propagation of ideas, linked together the great cities in which the many nationalities of the empire had their centres. A completely organised system of posts enabled travellers to pass from one end of the world to the other, and find at every stage a change of horses or a night's lodging. It was a natural result of this facility for communication that the great towns were becoming everywhere assimilated to the Roman pattern, and that the comforts and even the amusements of Roman life were everywhere to be found. But the Rome whose manners were thus becoming universal was not the Rome of the early republican days. From the latter part of the second century B.C. the conquered Greeks had been importing into the city of their conquerors the literature, the art, and the speech of Hellas. The culture and even the language of Romans had thus become largely Greek; nor were the habits which they taught the provincials any more purely Roman. Over a large part of the empire the Greek language had come to be spoken before Roman

conquest began: the conquests of Alexander had had so much of permanent result, and the cities of the East (including Egypt) were already so generally similar in speech and manners, as to assist considerably in the unification of the empire of which they became a part. Naturally, then, the common speech of the empire was not Latin, but Greek; and with Greek a man might travel anywhere and be understood. It should be noticed, however, that the 'Romanising' of the provinces did not as a rule extend to the country districts: these retained their own speech and manners unchanged. Aramaic, for instance, was spoken in Palestine, and the 'speech of Lycaonia' in the south-west of the Galatian province. This fact will be seen to have had some influence on the directions taken by the expanding Church.

The provinces of the empire were held together by a complex system of administration. Cities were allowed a certain amount of self-government, but the real authority was exercised by a magistrate from Rome, who was either a legate, deputed by the emperor himself, or a pro-consul, the nominee of the senate. Where a subject prince was suffered to retain his dignity and a part of his prerogatives, as was the case in Palestine, a Roman procurator, the subordinate of a provincial governor, controlled the exercise of his functions. But besides the unity of administration, the empire was fortunate in possessing a certain degree of religious unity, and that of a kind unparalleled in the history of the western world.

Decay of the Roman religion.—The Romans of the early republic had been used to practise a religion which invested with sanctity and dedicated to supernatural protection all the phases of agricultural and domestic life; every domestic occasion and every family tie were believed to depend on the favour of some divine being: children learned that their birth, their nursing, their first steps, their learning to talk, had each its appropriate god or fairy, and thus the whole life of the home, with its ceaseless round of pious observances, was felt to have an intimate relation with the powers of an unseen world. The same 'superstitiousness' marked the old Italian feeling towards Nature. All natural

forces were thought of as beings capable of goodwill or hostility: farmers sacrificed to Ceres before ploughing; sailors to Neptune before making a voyage; woods and rivers had their tutelary spirits, with whom it was right to keep on good terms; and the farmer's year, like the round of domestic life, was marked and solemnised by the recurrence of its religious ceremonies.

But the religion of the old republic was not the religion of imperial Rome. In the country districts, indeed, little change had taken place. Superstitions survive even to the present day among the peasants of South Italy, which had their origin in the old nature-religion; and in the first century A.D., a witty Roman could still say that 'in Campania there were more gods than men.' But in Rome and among the educated the old-fashioned ritual had lost its meaning. With the influx of Greek thought had come first the identification of the native Italian gods, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, with Zeus, Hera, and Athena: the statues which to the Greek had symbolised the ideal of beauty, order, and strength, the dominant elements in his conception of deity, were accepted as representations of gods that owed their origin to the apotheosis of the forces of nature. But in the wake of this movement of Greek taste, Greek scepticism had followed. A religion so local and national as the Italian could not become cosmopolitan without ceasing to be natural, and in becoming conventional it ceased to be a faith, and degenerated into a set of ceremonies. *Cærimoniæ Romanæ* was the apt designation of the official ritual, by which only the women and the vulgar believed themselves brought into communication with the unseen.

The demand for a new faith.—The period of the early empire was, however, by no means a period of mere scepticism. Disbelief in the popular mythology was not universal, and, what is more, it was not necessarily irreligious. On all sides we trace the growth of a desire for a new religion. Apart from Judaism and Christianity, there were two chief sources from which this need could be supplied—

1. **The Greek mysteries.**—At Eleusis in Attica, and in

many of the Greek cities of Asia, were practised certain secret ceremonies which professed to satisfy man's desire for knowledge of the eternal truth by means of symbolic initiation. These rites did indeed take into account the real facts of human nature on which man's need and capacity for religion rest: they recognised sin, and provided a symbolic purification; they stimulated and attempted to satisfy man's spiritual ambition by means of a pageantry which introduced the purified novice as 'regenerate' from a darkened room into a scene of mysterious brightness and solemnity; blessedness and immortality were understood to be the fruit of initiation. It cannot be doubted that the appetite to which these ceremonies ministered was a genuine one. Men were becoming anxious about themselves, conscious of moral failure, aware that in order to face the unexplained 'something after death,' they needed an inward renewal of the will and a reconciliation with the powers, whatever they might be, that made the moral law. Such feelings were encouraged by the most sincere philosophers of the time. There was demand enough for sermons on subjects of deep moment to maintain in every city, whether as public teachers or domestic chaplains, a number of these men, who served, at any rate, to stimulate men's interest in deep questions. The tendency of the most influential type of philosophy—the Stoic—moved strongly in the direction of personal religion. Believing that the world was indwelt by Reason, and that man's duty was to conform himself to the law of that Reason, Stoics were beginning to discover how far man must always be from corresponding, unaided, with that law—how unattainable man's true 'nature' really was. Hence the Stoics were helping man to realise the fact of sin, and to feel the need of redemption.

2. **The worship of foreign deities.**—Republican Rome (and the early empire to a certain extent) was hostile to the introduction of foreign rites into Rome. But in the first century public feeling demanded more and more toleration. Intolerance of private ceremonies had always been impossible; and now public exhibition began to be freely made of cults that were, strictly speaking, illegal.

The religions of the East were materialistic in idea and sensual in practice. The women and uneducated classes of imperial Rome welcomed the frantic priests of the 'great mother' Cybele and Sabazius, as those of Athens had welcomed them, even when Athens was at its best. They demanded, if not religion, at least violent emotion in a religious form. In response to this demand, 'everything,' says Tacitus, 'that was scandalous and shameful flowed to Rome and was welcomed there.' Immoral rites, such as those of Astarte and Adonis from Phœnicia, and imposing spectacles such as the processions of Isis and Serapis, were accessible to Romans. From Persia came a form of monotheism, the worship of the sun-god Mithras, which had taken strong hold on the army, and may be traced wherever the legions have left marks of their occupation.

By these numerous and most varied forms of worship the general desire of men for a religion was stimulated but not satisfied. The opportunity thus given was often seized by prophets and teachers more or less fraudulent, who drew after them large followings of credulous seekers for a revelation. Philosophers meanwhile, especially those who concerned themselves with morals, watching the coincidence of increasing religiousness with declining morality, stood more and more aloof from religion. Moreover, this stream of foreign invasion flowing with varying force during the last centuries of the pre-Christian empire, baffled the efforts made by rulers such as Augustus and Domitian to reanimate the spirit of the old Roman religion: the Roman gods could not be duly served when all gods were Roman.

All these processes turned in the end to the profit of Christianity, which brought to a restless, dissatisfied world the offer of knowledge and moral regeneration. The resistance of paganism was always strong, and in many times of reaction violent; but it was never the resistance of a united and settled religious order. In the fourth century the emperor Julian attempted to set up a resistance of this kind, but the effort came too late, and rested solely on the personal influence of one man. The only antagonism which really checked the Christian

advance relied not on a personal conviction, but on an imperial policy—the policy which promoted the worship of the Roman emperors.

The religion of the Empire.—It was said above that the Roman empire possessed a certain religious unity; and in spite of the enormous variety of the beliefs and forms of worship practised within its limits, the policy of the emperors did succeed in creating and maintaining one cult which was universal—the worship of the Divi Augusti and the Genius of the Roman people. The history of this 'religion' dates from the reign of Augustus (B.C. 30—A.D. 14). It had been a part of Augustus' policy to initiate a serious revival of the old religion at Rome: twenty-nine temples and shrines in and about Rome were restored, the old religious corporations such as the Salii and the Arval Brothers, with their almost prehistoric rites, were encouraged to revive. But this movement was only intended to foster the true Roman spirit among Romans: it was not the prelude to any similar propaganda in the provinces. There a policy of universal toleration had always been maintained: the gods of conquered nations were approached with propitiatory offerings and added to the imperial pantheon. This liberalism had only two bounds: the religions of the world were as a general rule discouraged from appearing at Rome, and they were required not to be intolerant of the additional cult with which the empire provided them.

In the ancient world, the line which separates respect from reverence was not hard to ignore. The awe with which Julius Caesar was regarded found expression immediately after his death in the erection of an altar in his honour. What Romans could thus feel towards a man of genius, the world could feel towards Rome, and to the emperor in whom the genius of the empire seemed to be incarnate. In the lifetime of Augustus, temples were erected in his honour in Gaul and Asia. Augustus did not personally approve of this, but he was not anxious to suppress any expression of devotion to the power on which the world's peace and security depended. In the reigns of the next succeeding

emperors, the worship of Rome and the Augusti was developed throughout the world. Cities which paid unique veneration to particular deities, and would have resented the competition of any more local cult, were ready to welcome a worship which was too universal to clash with their special devotion. Barbarous tribes, who had long viewed the unchecked progress of the Roman eagles as a supernatural fact, found it easy to convert fear into reverence.

The political value of this new religion was very considerable: it bound the empire together by a tie which all were proud to acknowledge, and lent to the Roman instinct for ruling the solemnity of a supernatural sanction.

We shall find that the history of the Christian Church was deeply affected by this institution. Polytheists could afford to be tolerant: to add one god to a pantheon involves no sacrifice of principle. But the worship of one God is destroyed by the intrusion of a rival. The Jews' allegiance to a jealous God was always under special protection; the Church, which, as it grew, stood always more and more aloof from Judaism, was inflexible in its monotheism, but unprotected from the odium which this involved. Hence, through the working of the institution which gave religious unity to the empire, the Church and the State came to stand over against each other as irreconcilable enemies.

Judaism.—Of the great body of Jews whom the empires of the Euphrates valley had swept away northward, only a small proportion returned to Palestine. Many remained in Babylon, and many were dispersed over other lands. The history of the post-exilic Jews is therefore concerned with a divided nation, with the people of Palestine on the one hand and the Jews of the Diaspora or Dispersion on the other. The number of the Dispersed and the remoteness of their settlements from Palestine constantly increased. Commercial enterprise drew them, in the third century B.C., wherever Alexander's conquests had planted Greek civilisation. They became specially numerous in Egypt, and in Alexandria formed so considerable a part of the

population that two out of the five quarters were allotted to them, and a special magistrate administered their affairs. In the cities of Asia and the East, generally, were found populous ghettos, many of them dating from the time of Antiochus the Great (B.C. 220), who deported a large number of Jewish families from Palestine and settled them in Phrygia. At the beginning of our era, the cities of the West also had their Jewish colonies, thriving communities of shrewd and capable men of commerce. Pompey, who entered Jerusalem as conqueror in B.C. 63, had removed 30,000 Jews, it is said, to Rome itself; at any rate, the Hebrew population was large enough when the Church was founded to occupy a separate quarter in the region across the Tiber.

These Jewish populations, scattered though they were, preserved, as the Jews of to-day preserve, a marvellous degree of distinctness and racial unity. The strictness of life according to the law, with its regulations about food and marriage, and the barriers with which it repelled the alien, kept them everywhere apart from their Gentile neighbours; and while the Temple stood, to which every one sent his annual half-shekel, Jerusalem as their centre held all Jews together by the attraction which drew all alike to its constant festivals. The habit of travelling natural to a trading nation acted also as a bond of union, as the constant stream of commerce passed from city to city. This distinctness was recognised and allowed for by the Roman government: Jews were exempted from military service, and their Sabbath was a protected institution, legally counted as a *dies non*. The uniqueness of the Jewish religion was also left without interference; even the imperial worship was not exacted from a nation which was too useful to be destroyed, and so deeply monotheistic that it would choose annihilation rather than idolatry.

Jewish religion after the Exile.—The Jews brought back from exile a heightened sense of the unique holiness of Jehovah and the peculiar dignity of the people to whom He had committed the law. The release from direct foreign domination stimulated also their desire to realise the ideal of a State in which God alone had the name of

King. The revived worship of the Temple gave rise to a new complication of ceremonial order and a zealous study of legal detail. The germs of 'Pharisaic' principles and the interpretative work of Scribes must have had their origin in this period. The conquests of Alexander and the long struggles between the descendants of his generals brought Palestine into a contact with the Greek world which might have obliterated Hebraism altogether; but when Antiochus Epiphanes in 170 took possession of the holy city, desecrated the Temple, and attempted to transform the holy land by means of Greek idolatry, Greek ways of life, and Greek amusements, the family of the **Maccabees** headed a rebellion which rescued and restored the Church and nation alike. The last two centuries before Christ, starting with this violent reaction against foreign pollution, saw a great development of all that was peculiar to Judaism. Prophecy was at an end, but in its place the Scribes and **Pharisees** (the *separate, i.e.* anti-foreign, sect) promoted a minute study of the law, which served to legislate for particular cases on ostensibly Scriptural principles. A mass of 'traditions' grew up by the side of the written Word, just as the 'responsa prudentum' in the Roman law of the empire grew up by the side of positive legislation. The propagation of these traditions was carried on in the country districts by the synagogues, which served first as places of instruction and then as a kind of local substitute for the central worship of Jerusalem.

These two centuries were marked, however, by a great degeneration. The descendants of the Maccabees became kings with secular interests; and their royalty, always keenly opposed by the Pharisees, was so far from representing the throne of David that in B.C. 39 it passed, through Roman interference, into the hands of an Idumæan, **Herod the Great**. The religion of the Pharisees, meanwhile, had become in large measure formal, and the 'traditions' were used to justify unfaithfulness to the spirit of the law. The mass of the people, however, adhered to this type of teaching, while a majority of the wealthy, who held in the apostolic age the chief administrative positions, including the High

Priesthood, found justification for an easier way of life by rejecting the traditions of the elders and professing to hold the pure doctrine of Moses. This class, known as **Sadducees**, rejected even the beliefs as to the future life, which later Judaism, with its considerable apocalyptic literature, had developed.

The Messianic Hope.—The sects differed much among themselves in their attitude to the national ideal. The expectation of a *Messiah*, which took shape in the later prophetic period and was in the prophets inseparable from the hope of a spiritual regeneration, had sunk by the time of our Lord to a low level of secularity. The few who, in the true sense, 'awaited the consolation of Israel' were greatly outnumbered by those who wished for nothing more than freedom from Roman taxation. Hence, although about the time when Pompey defiled Jerusalem with Roman troops (B.C. 63) the Messianic hope found noble expression in the 'Psalms of Solomon,' it now more frequently gave rise to fanatic outbreaks of nationalism, such as were those of Judas of Gamala (A.D. 7) and Theudas (A.D. 45). From this type of patriotism the dynasty of the Herods kept itself free; and a small court party of 'Herodians' followed it in a willing and profitable subjection to Roman supremacy. The Sadducees, a lax and secular party, having everything to lose by patriotism, stood also on the safe side, and viewed the Messianic hope as no part of the original Mosaic tradition. The Pharisees on the other hand, though not a party of zealots, were strongly nationalist: their acquiescence in the Herodian dynasty was only a yielding to necessity, and to their teaching was due the wave of enthusiasm which would have taken Jesus by force and made Him king. The influence of the Messianic hope on the spread of Christianity is hard to estimate. To the mass of Jews Jesus was not the Messiah, and therefore their continued expectation only embittered their hatred for the Church. On the other hand, among the Gentiles, Messianic prophecy was not a primary instrument in their conversion, although it was freely used by apologists in controversy with pagan opponents. To the Church of Jerusalem, however, and to Jewish converts

everywhere, it was doubtless of the first importance that Palestinian tradition had retained, in however degenerate a form, the expectation of a national deliverer.

Judaism and foreign influences.—Meanwhile Judaism had been largely influenced by external forces. In Palestine itself, on the borders of the Dead Sea, a sect or community known as the **Essenes** had been founded, which borrowed from the far East the belief that matter was essentially evil, repudiated the sacrifices of the Temple, held curious speculations as to the origin of the world, and lived a life of strict asceticism with frequent ritual purifications. In the Dispersion, the tendency which drew all Jewish thought and prayer towards Jerusalem was indeed still active: the first chapter of the Acts shows how various were the regions from which the worshippers at the Temple were drawn. But a centrifugal tendency was also at work: the Dispersed people were aware how impossible it was that they should ever recover the home of their origin, and were accommodating themselves to the fact. In Egypt, for instance, there was a second temple at Leontopolis which repeated the sacrifices of Jerusalem at a distance from the holy city. This temple was erected more than a century and a half before Christ by Onias, a claimant for the High Priesthood; originally schismatic, it was yet tolerated by later authority. This sanctuary seems to have had but little influence; its existence, however, was a remarkable fact, as being inconsistent with a strict adherence to the law. Much more important was the tone of the educated Jewish world of the Dispersion, especially in its strongest centre, Alexandria. Here was the true meeting-point of East and West: a great Greek city in close commercial relations with the Mediterranean on the one hand, and the East as far as India on the other. It was here, most of all, that Jews became cosmopolitan.

The Septuagint.—Scriptural Hebrew, superseded even in Palestine by Aramaic, became to the Greek Jews a dead language, and a Greek version of the Scriptures had to be prepared. This translation, promoted according to a Jewish story by Ptolemy Philadelphus (B.C. 284), and

miraculously executed by seventy-two interpreters, was in reality the growth of many years. By the time of our Lord, it was the Bible of by far the larger half of the Jewish world. But contact with Greek education effected more than the resetting of Scripture in an alien speech: it familiarised Jews with religious and philosophical conceptions of an alien type. Books such as the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus illustrate the growth among Jews of a tolerance and sympathy which brought Jew and Greek together into an intellectual kinship such as the Palestinian Pharisees must have viewed with abhorrence. This breaking down of the barriers between Jew and Gentile created a class of Hebrew thinkers to whom their religion was a philosophy like the philosophies of the Greeks, and superior only in the fact that it rested on a true and very ancient revelation. All wisdom, it was admitted, came from one Source, Who enlightened Jew and Gentile alike. 'Plato,' said one writer, 'is Moses speaking Greek.' Some Jews even took this epigram literally, and sought to prove that all the best spirits of the Greek schools drew from Hebrew sources.

The greatest Jew of this liberalising class was an exact contemporary of our Lord and the Apostles, **Philo of Alexandria** (died about A.D. 45). Philo was a genuine Jew, devoted to the Scriptures and deeply learned in them, but he represented a Judaism which could exist wholly apart from Jerusalem and its sacrifices. Widely read in every kind of Greek literature and philosophy, he found it possible to harmonise the two sides of his education by means of an elaborate allegorical interpretation of the Bible. This method, which attempted to gain a deeper insight into Scripture while evading its difficulties, had been applied to pagan mythology by many Greek thinkers, and was not new to students of the Bible.[1] Philo so applied it as to find in the Bible a revealed Platonism, according to which man's end or ideal goodness consisted in assimilation to God—his worst obstacle was the body with its tendency to drag the soul downward—and his way to victory lay through asceticism and

[1] See for instance Gal. iv. 24 ff., with which 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10, and Heb. vii. 1 ff. may be compared.

contemplation. Philo was of great importance in the history of Judaism: in no one had Hellenism been so completely assimilated; but in the history of Christianity his influence was far greater, for some of the greatest Christian teachers inherited his Platonism and his method of allegory; and the asceticism of Philo found its way through them into the Church, and became the inspiring principle of the monastic life.

The liberalising tendency which produced such men as Philo did not affect the mass of Jews. They remained throughout the empire a class separate in feeling from the Gentiles, who often repaid their unsociableness with open hostility. If at Rome the natural attractiveness of monotheism drew some seekers of truth to the worship of Jehovah, and a current of fashion chanced to set in the same direction, yet in the world at large few converts were made to Judaism. The Rabbis never set out to conquer the world. But Judaism was at least geographically universal; and the religion which came out from it to conquer the world started with the advantage of having some ground prepared for it in every city. The apostolic missions made the synagogues of the world their first destination, preaching Christ to men who were expecting a Messiah. The comparative unsuccessfulness of these missions to Jews meant that the importance of the synagogues to the Church was transitory; but at the outset it was real, and even when the Church came to depend for its growth mainly on Gentile converts, it owed to the Judaism of the Dispersion one permanent debt—the power to put into their hands the Hebrew Scriptures in the universal language of the empire.

CHAPTER II

THE APOSTOLIC AGE

In Jerusalem, at the feast of Pentecost, in the year 29, the company which had gathered round the Apostles of the risen Lord received the new impulse which was to expand it into a universal Church. S. Peter, as representing the Apostles, affirmed that from the Resurrection a new era, predicted by the prophets, had begun: the Messianic rule of Jesus, so far from being annulled by His death, was now to have its realisation in a society of men baptized into His Name for the remission of sins; and into this kingdom the Jews first were called to enter. The body of men who accepted this teaching was at the outset, and for some years remained, a Jewish sect without any organised centre outside Jerusalem. The 'faith in the Name' of Jesus, on which it was founded, did not supersede or annul the faith which expressed itself in the sacrificial worship of the Temple. Among the earliest adherents, indeed, were a considerable number of priests. The Church seemed thus at first to be a special movement of orthodox Judaism, and as such it was in popular favour. Its only opponents were the official chiefs of the priestly organisation, who, being Sadducees, were unfavourable to the Messianic idea, and very hostile to the preaching of a resurrection. Even so, however, the document from which S. Luke drew his account of those early days speaks of little or no organised antagonism to the new society. The Word was preached openly, the internal organisation of the community was unhindered, its members frequented the Temple without molestation; and nothing but remonstrance was attempted by the official

opposition. These first years of steady advance were, however, interrupted by a social difficulty which foreshadowed the future struggle between Jewish and Catholic Christianity. The society included among its members some who were not pure Jews by birth, but Greek proselytes; and these were put at some disadvantage in the daily ministrations, their claims as members being considered secondary to those of the pure Jews. This unfairness was soon remedied by the appointment of seven special officers chosen from the Jews and Hellenists alike, whose arbitration would both satisfy the aggrieved parties and relieve the Apostles from an invidious and burdensome task.

Dispersion and extension of the Church.—It is not to be supposed that the Apostles had forgotten their vocation as missionaries to the whole world. A later tradition asserts that they had a special instruction to complete seven (or twelve) years' preliminary work in Jerusalem. But the train of events which led them in the end to seek wider opportunities was set in motion by causes outside their control. The truce between the Church and the Law was bound, in fact, to prove a delusion, and the populace of Jerusalem was to be compelled to choose between the two. The reality of the issue was first made clear by the preaching of one of the seven deacons. **Stephen**, himself presumably a Hellenist, began to denounce the people which had rejected its Messiah with a vehemence that roused an equally vehement conservative reaction. The murder of Jesus was parallel, he taught, to the worst apostasies of every period of Jewish history. This denunciation of authority was taken by the Pharisaic party as an incitement to a religious revolution, and as it was a matter in which a Roman governor could not be induced to act, a popular tumult was organised: Stephen died as a blasphemer, sentenced under the Levitical code, the formal correctness of the procedure being guaranteed by Saul, the very man through whom the liberation of the Church from the fetters of the Law was to be accomplished.

The martyrdom of Stephen had far-reaching results. Not only did it initiate in Jerusalem an antagonism

between unbelieving and Christian Jews, which only came to an end with the city itself, but it proved the signal for a movement of active persecution, which scattered the seeds of the faith far and wide throughout Judæa, Samaria, and the cities of the Dispersion. If the career of Saul the persecutor was typical, it may be inferred that the authorities at Jerusalem determined to follow the scattered society and exterminate it, by making each local synagogue a centre of anti-Christian zeal. The defection of Saul, however (in A.D. 35 or 36), seems to have robbed them at once of their leading spirit and their chief instrument, and restored peace to the endangered Church. Meanwhile, the new Way was beginning to be known outside the limits of strict Judaism. The scattered converts had reached Samaria, Damascus, Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. The evangelisation of Samaria by the deacon Philip involved a great abandonment of principle and prejudice. The Samaritans, a mixed population, descended in part from colonists imported from the provinces of Assyria in the eighth century, and intermarried with Jews who escaped deportation, were all the more bitterly hated by genuine Jews for the claim which they made to a share in the religious inheritance of Israel. Worshipping Jehovah on Mount Gerizim, and using the Pentateuch as their Bible, they were affected (as the story of Simon Magus and the early history of Gnosticism show) by influences traceable to the far East. They expected a Messiah, but the people of the Messiah regarded them as heretics and schismatics; and when Philip, backed by the Apostles, decided to neglect this prejudice and preach that in Christ the Jewish and Samaritan hopes were alike fulfilled, the first definite step was taken towards realising the catholicity of the Church. A step somewhat parallel in importance was the consent of S. Peter to associate with and baptize the Gentile soldier Cornelius; but significant as this event was in its relation to S. Peter's own convictions, it did not represent a final victory of principle. That victory was not to be won in Palestine: it was effectually prepared for by the Christians of Antioch.

The first Gentile Christians.—Antioch, the metropolis of

Syria, lay fifteen miles from the mouth of the Orontes and from its seaport Seleucia. One of the most magnificent and wealthy cities of the ancient world and a centre of world-wide commerce, it had a large Jewish population, living necessarily in close contact with Greek customs and ideas. Here a considerable number of the refugees from Jerusalem found a home and an opportunity for propagating the faith. It would perhaps have been hard to conceal a movement so vigorous from those of the Greek citizens who had any sympathy with Judaism: the teachers of Antioch were far-sighted enough to make it known to them deliberately. The admission of a body of Greeks to the Church was soon reported at Jerusalem, where, like the Samaritan mission of Philip and the conversion of Cornelius, it disturbed the conscience of the community. Their delegate Barnabas—himself a Levite—was convinced by what he saw that the new departure was justified by its results, and that the opening offered to the Brotherhood at Antioch ought to be followed up with the utmost energy. He therefore resolved to make use of a convert whom the Church had not yet learned to trust; and by bringing S. Paul from his retirement at Tarsus, he prepared the way for the inclusion of Gentiles in the Church, not on sufferance, but as of right.

S. Paul already believed that the scope of his mission was to be wider than the Jewish world, and the year which he now spent in Antioch was a prelude, serving to mature his ambitions and acquaint him with his future helpers.

Missionary work of S. Paul.—Tarsus, the birthplace of the Apostle, lay on a great and ancient highway that united the eastern and western worlds. Not far eastward was the great barrier range of Taurus and the narrow pass known as the Cilician Gates, the narrow entry through which the merchants, soldiers, and administrators of the Roman empire came and went. The associations of the place were such as would draw a man's interest and imagination westward, and the circumstances of S. Paul's birth and education there seem thus to have fitted him in a special way for framing and

carrying out a great conception of travel and teaching. To a Jew the world centred in Jerusalem and had its circumference in the settlements of the Dispersion. S. Paul was a Jew, but he was also a Roman citizen, owning a status derived from Rome and privileges valid throughout the empire. To him, therefore, his mission to the Gentiles was a mission to the whole world: it aimed, that is, at making the Church as universal as the empire.

The working of this great ambition, which S. Paul's letters sufficiently illustrate, may be traced in the methods and routes adopted by the Apostle. Later missionaries have often taken in hand the conversion of single districts, working in town and country alike: S. Paul saw that in the empire ideas moved and spread with great rapidity whenever they took hold on the cities. He therefore worked chiefly at these central points, and never moved far from the chief lines of communication.

S. Paul's first journey.—The plan of his first journey (A.D. 47) is not known to us, nor did S. Luke know it: whatever it was, an attack of illness (the 'thorn in the flesh') combined with other difficulties to prevent S. Paul from carrying it out. In the event the Apostle, after a few months spent in Cyprus, the home of his companion Barnabas and other Antiochene converts, restricted himself to working in a group of towns in the south-west corner of the Roman province of Galatia, and founding those Galatian churches to which he had afterwards occasion to write. His procedure now, and throughout his career as a missionary, was to present himself first of all before the local synagogues and speak as a Jew to Jews; for although he was aiming ultimately at the conversion of the Gentile world, he wished to build everywhere, if possible, on a Jewish basis (Acts xiii. 46; *cf.* iii. 26); where this was impossible, the responsibility was to rest on the Jews themselves. The story of the first journey contains typical instances of the official Jewish opposition by which the Apostle's 'turning to the Gentiles' was justified. Converts were made everywhere; but as soon as their number became considerable, a violent

official reaction was set up. The synagogue was closed to the preaching of Christ. The Gentile populace was instigated to join in the opposition, and S. Paul either devoted himself to instructing non-Jews or passed on to another city. Orthodox Judaism was closely organised; persecution followed him from one synagogue to the next, and was sometimes ready to meet his arrival (Acts xvii. 6; *cf.* xxi. 27).

Second and third journeys.—The scheme of the second journey (A.D. 49-51), as S. Paul framed it, was wide, but it was overruled in favour of a still larger enterprise. The intended journey through the great towns of the western Asiatic coastlands had to take a wider circle, passing along the Romeward route as far as Philippi, and thence southward as far as Athens and the centre of Greek commerce, Corinth. When S. Paul had returned to Antioch after finishing this great enterprise, he found himself responsible for the well-being of two considerable groups of churches—the Galatian societies in the east, and those of Greece in the west. He was now to find a centre from which he could oversee the progress of these widely separated communities; and in **Ephesus** he found both this and the opportunity for beginning the work which on his second journey he had wished to do. During the period of between two and three years (52-55) spent in Ephesus, 'the whole of Asia (*i.e.* the western part of Asia Minor) heard the Word of God,' and S. Luke is at pains to impress on his readers the success and importance of the work done. But S. Paul did not mean to settle permanently here. Through the Jews whom trade or Roman police measures scattered from the capital eastward (such as were Aquila and Priscilla), he had knowledge of the growth of a Christian community in Rome itself. He was well acquainted with many of its members, and had sent them a treatise to supply the place of his personal mediation in the struggle between the Jewish and the Gentile elements among them. His ambition had long drawn him towards the capital of the world, and it was to be satisfied in an unexpected way. When the riot in the theatre at Ephesus had made it prudent for him to leave the city, after a few months

spent in Greece S. Paul began to make his way back to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost.

Arrest and first imprisonment.—There it was already known to the Church that Jewish feeling was running high against the Apostle of the Gentiles, and he was advised to make public exhibition of his orthodoxy by an act of ceremonial solemnity. But the Jews foiled this policy by an appeal to popular passion; and a false charge of having introduced Gentiles into the Temple would have cost S. Paul his life, but for the intervention of Roman soldiers. For the sake of public order the Apostle was hurried away to Cæsarea, and there he was kept through the slackness and corruption of Roman officials for two full years (56-58). During his travels he had often had occasion to use the protection which Roman law guaranteed to those who held the Roman franchise: it had saved him from some indignities and embarrassed the local magistrates at Philippi; it had saved him from the Jews of Corinth; it had stood between him and an act of summary injustice at Jerusalem. Now it made a way for his removal from Cæsarea, where it was clear that he stood little chance of fair treatment: as Festus said, 'he might be set at liberty,' but, in fact, he had remained two years in captivity. Every citizen had one chance of appeal which no magistrate dared to disregard, and of this chance S. Paul now availed himself: he appealed to Cæsar; and, after an adventurous journey, was brought to the capital of the empire. Here he remained in 'custodia militaris' for two years, teaching, organising, and writing, till a long-delayed decision set him once more at liberty (2 Tim. iv. 16, 17). His subsequent movements are hard to trace. When he wrote to the church of Colossae and to Philemon the Colossian, he was intending to pay a first visit to that church: we hear of his being in Crete, Miletus, Ephesus, Troas, and of his intention to pass a winter at Nicopolis, on the Greek coast opposite Brundusium. His hopes were still moving westward towards the Roman colonies in Spain,[1]

[1] See Rom. xv. 24. Clement of Rome speaks of S. Paul as travelling 'to the extremity of the West': the Muratorian fragment (*c.* A.D. 180) says that he went to Spain. His friend

but the outbreak of the Neronian persecution in A.D. 64 probably prevented their realisation. Either in this or the following year, the thirty years of S. Paul's apostleship were crowned by martyrdom at Rome.

S. Paul and the Jewish Law.—Christianity had from its earliest beginnings to set itself in opposition to the received conceptions of religion. The teaching of our Lord had its negative side, for it roused men to free themselves from the traditions and 'commandments of men,' by which Pharisaism had 'made the commandment of God of none effect.' It was necessary that men should learn to seek for the substance of religion in spiritual freedom, and not in mechanical observances. The stern protests of our Lord against the burdensome unrealities of Jewish technical righteousness were a scandal to the authorities, who regarded them as expressions of an ignorant antagonism to the respectable traditions of the learned. The Crucifixion was an open proof that Judaism was incapable of spiritual reform from within. But the real relation of the religion of Jesus Christ to Judaism was in no way understood until the conflicts of S. Paul with himself and with Judaism, both within and without the Church, had made the issue clear.

The question at issue.—The extension of the Church in Antioch raised a practical difficulty, behind which there lay a question affecting the ultimate principle of the Church's existence. The practical difficulty came from the necessity of adjusting the conditions of church life in Antioch, so as not to conflict with the narrower circumstances of the Jewish mother Church at Jerusalem. In this wider sphere a new gospel was being preached to Gentiles; to the Christians of Jerusalem, it had never occurred to offer it on any but the old terms: to be a Christian, they held that one must first become a Jew. This concrete question as to the terms of admission into the Church was, however, only the occasion of controversy. No settlement or compromise on this point could save the Church from

Crescens visited Gaul (according to one reading of 2 Tim. iv. 10): whether S. Paul ever went so far westward cannot be determined.

having to decide the larger question of principle which lay behind, as to the relation between the grace of Jesus Christ and the 'works' of the old covenant. Had this not been determined, it might have been possible for the Church to compromise with its Gentile converts, and yet retain a superstition in favour of those who came into it through the Jewish door. In reality, it was with the Jews that a compromise was made; and the type of Christianity professed by them, so far from being held to be the more perfect way, soon fell into the background. This result must be ascribed directly to the influence of S. Paul. His part in the technical controversy as to the terms of Church membership may be first described. It should be remembered that our knowledge of it is derived from two sources—from S. Paul's own letters, written in the heat of the actual dispute, and from S. Luke's narrative, written many years later, and giving us a picture in which the sharpness of the contest is not unnaturally toned down.

The Apostolic Council, A.D. 49.—On returning from his first missionary journey to Antioch, S. Paul continued, with a confidence now justified by experience, his work among the Gentiles. He was soon interrupted by certain zealots from Jerusalem, who insisted that circumcision was an indispensable qualification for Church membership. Their views found acceptance to such a degree that an appeal from them to the chiefs of the whole Church became necessary. S. Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by the uncircumcised convert Titus, went up to Jerusalem to relate the success of their missions among the Gentiles, and to ask whether they were to be hindered by the restrictions on which orthodox Judaism laid such stress. A council of the Apostles, together with the whole Church of Jerusalem, after a vehement discussion, decided wholly in favour of S. Paul. The decree pronounced by S. James in their name recommended Gentile converts to make only such concessions to Jewish feeling as would make it possible for the two sections of the Church to live together without friction. In the admission of proselytes to the Jew communities, it had been

the rule to enjoin on them certain regulations about food and marriage, known as the 'commandments of Noah.' Three of these were now enjoined upon the Gentile converts to Christianity: they were to use such food as a conscientious Jew need not scruple to share, and not to marry within prohibited degrees of kinship.

Further disputes.—The effect of this decision, of which singularly little is heard in subsequent history, was hardly as complete as was hoped. Antioch was once more visited by emissaries of the Judaising party, who claimed to represent the head of the Church in Jerusalem; and so little had the conference done to quiet the scruples of the Hebrew section of the Church, that on this occasion Barnabas, and even S. Peter (according to one theory of the order of events),[1] abandoned their new principles, and stood out against the Catholicism preached by S. Paul. The new dissension had, it would seem, little permanent effect on the predominantly Gentile Church of Antioch; but its disturbing effects were felt throughout all the Churches which the Apostle of the Gentiles had founded; and in the letters sent by him to the Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, and Philippians, we have a record of a struggle in which the very existence of a Catholic Church was at stake. At Corinth, four parties were soon formed—one faithful to S. Paul, and one setting up the Alexandrine Apollos as its model; a third, possibly a knot of Judaisers, claiming to represent S. Peter, and a fourth which disclaimed all authority but that of Christ. The interest of the struggle here was mainly a personal one: if the dissidents could be made to feel the reality of S. Paul's apostleship, the chief point would be gained. To the Philippians a somewhat similar appeal was sent from the founder of their Church while confined in Rome: they were to remember that he was a true Hebrew, and that none of his antagonists

[1] If Gal. ii. is not a continuous story, the dissension between S. Peter and S. Paul (vv. 11-14; *cf.* Acts xv. 1) may have preceded the apostolic council (vv. 1-10). *Cf.* Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. 'Chronology of the New Testament,' vol. i. p. 424, col. 1.

—'enemies,' he calls them, 'of the cross of Christ'—could claim to be truer to the hope of Israel than he.

Epistles to Galatians and Romans.—But the Galatian and Roman letters alone contain S. Paul's full exposition of the ultimate principles on which his conviction rested. The time and place at which the former was written are matters of controversy: it was called forth, however, by the news that the group of Churches in south-west Galatia had been misled into some general expression of their desire to impose on themselves and their converts greater burdens than those which the apostolic council had prescribed. S. Paul answered them with passionate earnestness. They are forgetting, he tells them, that the coming of Christ was the beginning of a new epoch. The law was in its essence transitory, and its bondage only a preparation for the freedom of the life of faith. In trying to carry over the external restrictions of the old dispensation into the new, they were attempting an impossible union between two incompatible kinds of religion, between a religion of slavery and a religion of sonship. The error was not one of policy: by exalting the law, it taught men to think lightly of the change brought into life by Jesus Christ, and set the whole work of grace in a wrong perspective. To gain the true perspective, S. Paul had surrendered everything: he had passed through a spiritual revolution that was painful in proportion to his strength; and now it was bitter to him to find men lightly abandoning what had cost him so much. The letter to the **Romans**, written in A.D. 55 or 56, shortly after that to the Galatians, works out the same ideas with less personal emotion, but with even greater intellectual fervour. There are indications which make it possible that the main body of this letter, like the Catholic Epistles, was intended for the Church at large, rather than for the single Church whose name it now bears. It is, indeed, rather a treatise than a letter: addressed to both sections of the Church, it is intended to meet the activity of Judaising Christians by a detailed and positive exposition of the righteousness which comes by faith, and to remind the Gentiles of the real prerogatives of the people to

whom this inheritance was first promised. The main line of argument, in its relation to current controversy, may be briefly indicated thus: The whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, is deformed by sin. To make men righteous, something is needed which can free them from this deformity. The law (to which the Jewish Christians would now make every one subject), holy as it is, can only serve to make men conscious of guilt and failure; but the love of God has intervened to make men capable of putting off their old selves, and developing into the fulness of a new life, in which the ruling principle is not sin, but the sense and reality of sonship to God. This new life starts in faith, and even its rudiments are so generously recognised by God that He removes the condemnation of sin at the very outset from those who have begun to live it. Now this 'justification' is exactly what life under the old law could never give: it was indeed never meant to give it, for the whole story of the Jews, from the promise made to Abraham onward, has been that of a people waiting for the fulfilment of a hope, for a promised 'inheritance.' That promise is now fulfilled, and the new era has begun.

End of the controversy.—The further history of this all-important contest is singularly short. It must have ceased almost at once to be severe enough to menace the Church's unity. The Pauline doctrine prevailed, and its opponents found themselves, as we shall see, a dwindling minority with an ever-weakening hold on the Christian part of their creed. Even at the end of S. Paul's life, the Judaism which set itself against him had taken an entirely different colour. Such false brethren as those of the Galatian letter, who objected to the existence of uncircumcised Christians, are no longer heard of: in their place we find men who profess doctrines and use practices quite foreign to orthodox Judaism. The Colossian letter, and those to Timothy and Titus, speak of ascetic teachings about eating and marriage, burdensome injunctions about the observance of days, unsound theories about the place and influence of angelic beings in the world. This is quite a new strain of heresy, and it seems to indicate that from about the year 60 a current of

influences very like those of the Essenes had begun to make itself felt in Asia Minor and Crete (Tit. i. 10, 1 Tim. i. 3-7). The promoters of these doctrines were indeed Jews, but the way in which S. Paul meets them shows how little they had in common with his first Jewish antagonists. Nothing is now heard of the old antitheses between law and grace, works and faith: the danger is treated as primarily a moral one, an attempt of insincere and corrupt persons to lower the standard of Christian living to the level of their own unhealthy creed.

Church life in the Apostolic Age. — Christianity is essentially an inward power in the lives of individual men, quickening and transforming them through the manifold activity of the Holy Spirit; but no less essentially it demands outward and visible expression in the corporate life of the unity of believers. From the beginning, to come into the Church meant primarily a spiritual change, but it meant also a readjustment of the rest of life, intellectual and social; for the Church was to all its members an association for worship, a school of instruction, and an organisation for social welfare.

1. **Worship.**—The earliest Christians possessed no buildings specially set apart for religious uses: their meetings were held in private houses, especially in the large rooms attached to the houses of the wealthier members. At Jerusalem in the earliest period, the meetings for prayers and the breaking of the bread were held every day, but for the majority of churches a weekly meeting became the settled rule. It was on the first day of the week that the Corinthians were to make their offering for the famine-stricken Church of Jerusalem: on the same day the Church of Troas met for the Eucharist and to hear S. Paul preach. Before the end of the first century, this weekly festival of the Resurrection was generally called the **Lord's day**. While the Church and the synagogue worked together side by side, the Sabbath would be spent in the synagogue; but with the gradual separation of the Church from Jewish associations, the Sabbath lapsed into oblivion. As early as A.D. 110, Ignatius contrasts the two institutions, and tells the Magnesians that

the true Christian 'no longer observes Sabbaths, but fashions his life after the Lord's day, on which our life arose through Him.' The main outlines of worship were taken over by the Church from the services of the synagogue: the Old Testament was read and expounded (it must be remembered that the first generations of Christians had no other Bible), psalms were sung, and prayer offered. But to these elements the Church added two that were specifically Christian.

(a) **The Eucharist and the Agape or Love Feast.**—The usage of the earliest days was to reproduce the whole circumstances of the occasion on which the Eucharist was instituted. The actual breaking of the bread and blessing of the cup were therefore preceded, as in the Upper Room, by a common meal. But this natural union of sacred and secular elements was soon found (1 Cor. xi. 20-23) only too liable to abuse; and the Agape, which only existed for the sake of the Eucharist, had to be separated from it, and to become an element rather of the social than of the devotional life of the Church. With this development is to be connected the change of usage which placed the Eucharist at the beginning of the day, a change which the allusions of early literature do not enable us to trace with accuracy, but may with some probability be assigned to the first century. The deaconesses whom Pliny, in A.D. 112, put to the torture told him that the Christians met first before daylight to bind themselves to innocency of life by a *sacramentum*, and later in the day for a harmless ordinary meal; and though Pliny meant by 'sacramentum' a solemn form of religious promise, the whole expression strongly suggests that the reference is to the act of communion. Nothing positive can be said as to the early history of the rule which in later times forbade the use of other food before the Eucharist. The idea of fasting as a preparation for religious duties can be traced back to the time of the Apostles (Acts xiii. 2); and the *Didache*, or *Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles*, a Palestinian manual, perhaps as old as the year A.D. 100, enjoins such a fast in preparation for baptism; but it is precarious to press these analogies.

The two liturgical elements in the Eucharistic service

of which we have first-century information, are the commemoration of the Institution, of which the language of S. Paul to the Corinthians gives clear evidence, and the prayer of the presiding minister for the Church and the world. The letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians contains a prayer of this kind, which, in its general accordance with the fixed formulæ of later days, bears significant witness to the continuity of liturgical development. The first supplications are for the Christian body: for increase of knowledge, for deliverance from tribulation, and the supply of temporal and spiritual needs; then the prayer, ascribing all power to God, makes special intercession for the rulers of the empire, His delegates, and ends with an ascription of praise to the Father through Jesus Christ.

If the evidence of the *Didache* may be assigned to the first century, it may be added that this document prescribes for the Palestinian church, from which it probably came, usages of a striking singularity. The thanksgiving for the cup precedes that for the broken bread, and no mention is made of the words of Institution; although the fact that the bread is referred to as already broken may indicate that they have been previously recited. The other injunctions of the *Didache* are less surprising: the Eucharist is only to be given to the baptized; it is to be preceded by the confession of sins, and by the reconciliation of any who have a dispute with one another.

(b) **The exercise of spiritual gifts.**—The whole energy of the Christian life depends, S. Paul taught, on spiritual endowments specially given. Whether it be the administration of the society or subordinate church work, or instruction or meditation that occupies the individual, each has his *Charisma*. Most of these *Charismata* were what we should call special talents, dependent for their efficiency on the energy of their possessor. But the gift of prophecy and the gift of 'tongues' were different. Prophecy, indeed, was not in its normal form an ecstatic utterance beyond personal control: 'the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets'; but the gift of tongues appears (for positive knowledge is here out of

our reach) to have consisted in a sort of passive state of possession, in which things incomprehensible, at any rate to the hearers, were spoken. S. Paul frankly recognises the reality of this strange phenomenon, but uses language about it which amounts, relatively at least, to depreciation: the gifts which demand the conscious energy of service are put high above it. The use of these gifts, however, and especially that of prophecy, constituted, by the side of the normal worship, what has been called a 'liturgy of the Holy Spirit.' How long they held this place, it would again be easier to decide if the *Didache* could be exactly dated. There the 'Apostles and prophets' (apparently the same person could bear either name) form a special kind of itinerant ministry, so itinerant that a prophet demanding more than two days' hospitality must needs be an impostor: mysterious speech and symbolic actions parallel to those of the old Jewish prophets are to be expected of them.

2. Instruction.—During S. Paul's long stay in Ephesus, it became necessary for him to undertake systematic teaching. The synagogue was closed to him; he therefore hired the lecture-hall of Tyrannus, and, as an old reading in Acts xix. 9 affirms, taught there daily 'from the fifth to the tenth hour,' that is, from the time when workmen left their occupations till far on into the night. Teaching, as distinct from exhorting, is mentioned in the Roman and Ephesian Epistles as a special type of Christian work; and it is obvious that all kinds of converts would need instruction proportioned to their circumstances. The Jew or proselyte, who had already been instructed to worship one God and to understand His moral claims on man, would need less introductory discipline than the convert from paganism. The Epistle to the Hebrews gives us in an allusion an outline of the 'first principles of Christ' in which new converts were educated: there was laid for them a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection from the dead, and of eternal judgment. It is important to remember that the faith was thus from the beginning regarded as having an

intellectual content, and that the Church had to reckon with men's minds as well as with their consciences; for it was this necessity that gave rise both to Christian theology and to a large proportion of Christian literature; more precisely, it is to the energy of the apostolic age in teaching that we owe the New Testament.

The Gospels.—The preface to S. Luke's Gospel tells us that the birth, life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was in the author's day the subject of catechetical instruction, and that many persons had already committed them to writing. Parallel to this is the testimony of an elder of the apostolic age, preserved by Papias (who wrote early in the second century), that S. Peter used to give historical instructions on the life of Christ as the needs of his hearers demanded, and that on these instructions S. Mark based his Gospel. Even without these explicit statements, it can be proved, from the close similarity which unites the first three of our Gospels, that a Gospel narrative, which was the basis of all three, was written down for public instruction at a very early date—a date, we may safely say, previous to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The didactic aim and origin of the Gospels is plain also from their differences: the peculiar characteristic of S. Matthew being his anxiety to teach Jewish converts how fully Jewish hopes were fulfilled in Christ, and that of S. Luke to emphasise, subtly but unmistakably, the universal range of the message of redemption. The Gospel of S. John is still more doctrinal in purpose: it is a picture drawn after a lifetime of teaching. The narratives of the synoptists are carefully selected: they must represent only a fraction of what was known; but that of S. John is so economised as to be wholly subordinate to the teacher's conception of the manifestation, rejection, and acceptance of the Eternal Word.

The Epistles.—The Gospels are thus the permanent record of what was taught in the first age: and this is even more obviously true of the Epistles. Some of these deal wholly or in part with contemporary affairs; but for the most part, they were meant to be read and circulated as permanent standards of teaching. Thus

the Colossian letter was meant to go on to Laodicea, and a letter to Laodicea was meant to go on to Colossae, while those to the Ephesians and Romans bore probably from the first the character of general addresses to the Church at large; and S. Peter, S. James, and S. John sent writings of a fairly general character to Christians scattered over a very large area. The anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews is professedly nothing more than an instruction supplementary to catechetical teaching already received, and forms thus an interesting parallel to the third Gospel: like S. Luke, its author might have said that he wrote 'that ye may fully know the certainty of the things in which ye have been instructed.'

3. **Social Unity.**—The name given to the followers of our Lord in the Gospels, 'the disciples,' expresses the single relation of dependence which held them together during His earthly life. After the Pentecost of A.D. 29, the manifold life of the body of disciples expresses itself in the variety of the names they bear: they are the 'saints,' the 'Church of God,' and in respect of their social unity 'the brothers or brotherhood.' The closeness of the new social tie was such that it brought the disciples to feel responsible (*a*) for the use of their property, (*b*) for their conduct in general, not only to God and their consciences, but also to the whole body.

(a) **The Church and private property.**—In the earliest chapters of the Acts, the word 'communion' or 'fellowship' is used to express the common life in which all the Christians of Jerusalem shared. The description in Acts ii. 42-45 does not suggest a system of organised socialism, but simply that each man's money was at the disposal of any one of his fellow-converts who happened to be in want: the common enthusiasm left no room for private self-interest. These generous impulses soon came to need regulation: in Acts iv. 35, 37, and v. 2, the contributions are paid into a common fund, 'laid at the Apostles' feet.' But it is to be noted that they remained absolutely voluntary: property was not abolished, but consecrated with a new sense of responsibility. At the same time, the amount of money in the common funds was so considerable that it was possible to

provide from it a common table, or 'daily ministration' for the poorer members, a service so extensive as to require the appointment of seven officials for its regulation.

This 'community of goods' has no parallel in the apostolic age outside Jerusalem: the communism of the Essene Jews, with which it has been compared, differed widely from it in being compulsory and monastic. It was, moreover, in essence a temporary arrangement: the second coming of Christ was believed to be close at hand, and that expectation must have co-operated strongly with the new-born social instinct of the Church to cheapen the value of earthly possessions in the eyes of His disciples. But the principle of fellowship pervaded the whole Church. S. James, indeed, writing not long before the fall of Jerusalem, had sternly to rebuke the decay of this spirit and the increasing selfishness of the rich; but the true ideal, constantly upheld by S. Paul,[1] was a real force, and two instances, at least, are recorded in which it was generously realised. In the year 47 one of the local famines, which were common in Claudius' reign, caused great suffering in Judæa; and the church of Antioch, where the calamity had been foreseen, recognising its duty to the distressed brethren, sent S. Paul and Barnabas to use the sum it had been able to collect in distributing food among the sufferers. Again, in the last years before S. Paul's arrest, a wide scheme of benevolence occupied the attention of the Pauline churches. The increasing poverty of the Christians of Jerusalem was made the opportunity for a great corporate act of self-denial: by weekly contributions in the churches of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia, a large sum was collected and brought by delegates to Jerusalem. 'The stress which the Apostle lays on this collection is only explained when we regard it as the emblem and the instrument of the corporate fellowship of the locally scattered Christian society.'[2]

(b) **The Church and moral discipline.**—All societies have some need of discipline, in so far as their members are

[1] Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. vi. 18; *cf.* Heb. xiii. 16.

[2] Armitage Robinson, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 461.

committed to any course of action in order to maintain their qualifications for membership. The closer the tie of corporate union, the greater are the demands made on the loyalty of the individual. The apostolic ideal of the Church conceived it as a body of men deriving all their capacity for any kind of good from one Source, and held most closely together in their common responsibility to Him and to one another. Consequently, for all who were 'called to be saints,' the morality of each was an affair in which the whole body was interested as well as the individual conscience. That this principle was part of the original idea of the Church is clear from the commission given by our Lord to the Apostles and the whole body to remit and retain sins. The New Testament shows more than one trace of its practical application. As S. John taught that only those who 'walk in the light' have the true 'fellowship one with another,' so S. Paul more than once cut off from the actual privileges of fellowship men who had been guilty of open and scandalous misconduct. At Corinth, an act of gross immorality was punished by such excommunication, as were Hymenæus and Philetus, teachers of debasing doctrines at Ephesus. The punishment is described in both cases in similar language: the men are 'delivered to Satan'; in one case 'for the destruction of the flesh.' It is inflicted by the Apostle 'in the name' and 'with the power of our Lord Jesus,' and the sentence is pronounced in presence of the whole Church. But the object of discipline was always (if we may except the mysterious story of Ananias and Sapphira) to restore the fellowship which the offence had interrupted. As S. Paul advises the Galatians to bear one another's burdens and to restore the lapsed in a spirit of meekness, so we find him enjoining the public restoration of the Corinthian offender 'in the person of Christ.' On the other hand, S. John recognised the possibility of a degree of sin which may put it out of the Church's power even to pray for its forgiveness.

Such appear to have been the elements out of which the later disciplinary system was, without fundamental change of principle, evolved. That confession of sin

must precede its forgiveness was, of course, an elementary principle. It is uncertain whether the public acknowledgment of sins, which by the third century had become an established requirement in serious cases, existed in the first age. But the recommendation of S. James contains it in the germ: 'confess your sins one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed,' and in the *Didache* a public confession of sins is required from those who are about to communicate.

CHAPTER III

CHURCH AND STATE DOWN TO A.D. 112

The propagation of great ideas, which alter men's conception of human life, is never without its political importance; and Roman politicians might have had to deal with Christianity, even if it had been only a new way of thinking. But it was always something more than this. Christians, wherever they were, formed part of a society: primarily of a local society, but also, and not less essentially, of a far larger unity. The local societies lived in constant communication with one another, and in a certain degree of isolation from other people. They held beliefs and used practices which were not known outside the brotherhood. Now, all governments regard secret societies with a certain degree of suspicion, unless their secrecy is known to be beneficent: it is always possible that what goes on underground, as it were, is dangerous to the social order as a whole. The Roman government was always suspicious of any form of combination: under the empire no *collegium* could be formed without the consent of the senate, ratified by the emperor; and this permission was not always easy to obtain. The emperor Trajan, for instance, even forbade the formation of a guild of 150 firemen, and of a 'dining-club' of poor people, at Nicomedia. Perhaps, then, the corporate character of Christianity might have brought it into conflict with Roman administration, even if it had been a mere society of idealists. But the actual hostility which came to exist between Church and empire, and lasted for two centuries and a half, grew from causes more complex than the Roman law against associations:

it was maintained as a part of imperial policy, and kept active by popular feeling. We have now to follow the growth of this policy, and account for the general ill-will which welcomed and assisted its continuance.

The Church tolerated down to A.D. 64.—For more than thirty years the existence of the Church as a separate body was ignored by government. S. Paul, as a Christian traveller, enjoyed all the privilege and protection of citizenship, and in return taught his fellow-Churchmen to regard the empire and its officials as beneficent powers 'ordained by God.' The issue between him and the Corinthian Jews was treated by Gallio at Corinth as a technical matter of Jewish law, and therefore outside his province as a magistrate. At Rome itself, during the reign of Claudius, a measure of police supervision was enacted against the Jews, a measure so severe that it drove many of them from the city. The historian Suetonius, in describing this incident, says that it was due to continuous riots stirred up by 'Chrestus.' It is quite possible that he has slightly misunderstood his authority, and that in reality these riots were due to the opposition which Christian teaching met with among the orthodox Jews. If so, we have here another instance of the fact that no distinction was at this time made between Jew and Christian. Both were tolerated everywhere, unless their conduct endangered the public peace. So long as this state of things continued, there was no persecution. The Church might be disliked as Jews were disliked everywhere, and individuals might suffer inconvenience, but to the official mind Christianity was neither a crime in itself nor suspected of criminal tendencies. Two cases may be quoted in this context: (1) In the year A.D. 57 or 58, Pomponia Græcina, wife of the Aulus Plautius who had enabled Claudius to add Britain to the empire in A.D. 43, was brought before a tribunal of her own family on a charge of 'foreign superstition.' The tribunal found her not guilty, but the remainder of her life, says Tacitus, was spent in unbroken melancholy. The conjecture that this foreign superstition was Christianity has a good deal of probability. *Tristitia* might well describe the severity with which a Christian would

hold aloof from the observances of a pagan family; and, indeed, it was in later times a constant charge against the new religion that it took the joy out of life. Now, in the oldest part of the catacomb of Callistus at Rome, a Christian sepulchral inscription, of the second or perhaps third century, has been discovered bearing the name of one Pomponius Græcinus, while other members of the Pomponian *gens* are buried not far off. Thus the descendants of Pomponia Græcina were certainly Christians, and the fact goes strongly to confirm the interpretation of Tacitus' story suggested above. If these converging indications are accepted, then the acquittal of this lady shows, that in A.D. 57-58 it was no crime at Rome to be a Christian. (2) In A.D. 59 or 60 S. Paul was brought to Rome, and some two years later came before the emperor Nero. Of this trial we know nothing except that the Apostle had to go through it unsupported by friends. But the result is known: he was 'delivered out of the mouth of the lion,' as he told Timothy. Now, the point on which the appeal to Cæsar was made must have been this: was S. Paul's conduct at Jerusalem riotous and treasonable? If it had already become a maxim of administration that all Christians were *ipso facto* criminals, acquittal would have been impossible; and further, if the emperor had taken the special characteristics of Christianity into account while deciding S. Paul's case, his action in acquitting him would have formed a precedent most favourable to the Church. Subsequent events make it clear that no such precedent was formed, and that no question of S. Paul's Christianity was raised at that time. The period of persecution had not yet begun.

Change of policy under Nero.—About two years later, in A.D. 64, the situation was very different. According to Tacitus, the Christian body had become universally unpopular, and was believed to exist for criminal purposes. When the great fire devastated half the city, it became necessary for the emperor, who found himself suspected of causing the disaster for his own ends, to fix the blame on some class whom the people would be glad to see extinguished, and the Christians were

ready to his hand. Tacitus' difficult narrative continues thus: 'First, then, some were hurried to trial, who confessed; then, on their information, a vast multitude was sent to join them—not so much on the charge of arson as on the ground that they were enemies of the human race. And their death was further made a public sport: some were dressed up in the skins of wild beasts and worried to death by dogs; some were crucified and set up to be burnt alive as an illumination when night came on. Nero had allowed his garden to be used for this spectacle, and gave a circus performance there, now mingling with the people in the dress of a charioteer, and now driving a chariot. Hence, although these people were guilty and deserved to be punished with the utmost severity, men began to pity them, and to feel that they were being destroyed rather to satiate the cruelty of an individual than to promote the public good.' This beginning of persecution had, then, no specifically religious cause. The populace were beside themselves with the desire to be avenged on the authors of the public calamity, and the policy of the emperor was to treat all Christians as incendiaries. The statement that some 'confessed' on being arrested may mean either that they confessed to being Christians, or that under torture they owned themselves guilty of arson. This point is, however, of small importance; for the vast multitude who suffered afterwards, suffered without doubt on the ground that the whole Church was either implicated in the fire, or was a society as hostile to civilisation as poisoners or magicians: Christianity, that is, became a crime because it was believed necessarily to involve criminal practices.

The barbarities of the year A.D. 64 came soon to an end; but they left behind them an enduring policy: the Church was henceforth proscribed.

Before the death of Nero, in A.D. 68, two illustrious names were added to the long list of his victims, those of S. Paul and S. Peter: both suffered, according to a quite trustworthy tradition, in Rome. They were buried, the one on the Ostian Way, the other in the Vatican; and on June 29th, A.D. 258, both bodies were removed for concealment to the catacombs of S. Sebastian

on the Via Appia. The day of this *depositio* became permanently appropriated to the commemoration of the two Apostles, and even gave rise to the story, which has no other ground, that they suffered on the same day.

The history of persecution during the reigns of Vespasian and Titus (A.D. 69-81) is obscure. Early Christian writers agree to single out Nero and Domitian as the only two persecuting emperors of the first century: Nero's successors are represented as having been comparatively favourable to the Church. There are, however, reasons for doubting the accuracy of this picture. The government of the Roman empire was never an arbitrary despotism: it did not make and unmake laws for mere caprice. Thus, although the death of Nero was certainly followed by an interval of peace, yet if Christians were recognised as a criminal class in A.D. 67, the silence of our authorities about the following years ought not to be interpreted as proving that they were then regarded as harmless. Further, the first Epistle of S. Peter, which was written, according to the safest theory,[1] towards the end of the reign of Nero, warned the Asiatic Christians, to whom it was sent, that they are to expect a period of severe suffering. They were told to expect that criminal charges would be laid against them, charges which they would have to repel; but they were also likely to be accused simply of being Christians: of this they were not to be ashamed, but to glorify God in His Name. Was this warning a false alarm? If not—and there is no positive reason for thinking that it was—it is a fair inference that Vespasian probably continued, in some of the provinces at least, the policy which Nero had laid down.

Domitian and his motives for persecution.—On the other hand, the evil pre-eminence assigned to Domitian (A.D. 81-96) can be fully justified by trustworthy evidence. It is true that we have no account of this persecution so detailed as the narratives of a later period; but such

[1] Prof. Ramsay (*Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 279 ff.) dates it as late as A.D. 80, on the ground that the stage of persecution implied in 1 S. Pet. iv. 12-17 cannot have been reached as early as A.D. 67.

evidence as we possess goes to show that severe measures were adopted in many parts of the empire. The reign of Domitian, like that of Tiberius, began well and ended in swift degeneration, both moral and political. A strong autocrat, he made himself master of the senate, and in consequence was never popular with the Roman aristocracy. A zealous conservative in dealing with public morals, and a strong upholder of the imperial religion, he always viewed the philosophical tendencies of the time with keen suspicion. But the greater part of his reign was free from the conspicuous tyranny of his last three years, when he used the unstatesmanlike weapons of persecution and delation against the men and sects from whom he thought himself in danger. The chief cause of this change was the fact that he had no children, which made him jealous of any able man who might aspire to succeed him, and increasingly intolerant of opposition. With this should be reckoned the deep financial embarrassments in which a magnificent expenditure on building had involved him. In the year A.D. 93 began a series of judicial murders and confiscations as heartlessly cruel as those of the last years of Nero: and to these was added a decree of the senate banishing all 'philosophers, astrologers, and soothsayers' from Italy.

Mutual hostility of Church and State.—It is to these years that the tradition which places Domitian among the persecutors assigns the composition of the **Revelation**; and, indeed, the whole attitude of that book towards the empire is such as only a policy of ruthless hostility could provoke. To S. Paul and S. Peter, the officials of the empire had a divine commission for the maintenance of law; and even during the Neronian persecutions, S. Peter copies the thought and language of the Epistle to the Romans in exhorting the Church to loyalty and good citizenship. But to S. John, the empire is Babylon drunk with the blood of the saints; and the souls of those who have died for the testimony of Jesus cry out against it from beneath the altar. In the epistle to the Church of Pergamos we have evidence as to the cause of this vehemence: 'I know where thou dwellest, where the

throne of Satan is.' The worship of the emperors was strongly encouraged by Domitian, who claimed for himself while living the unprecedented title of Lord and God; and in Asia during this period, the chief centre of the cult was the temple of Rome and Augustus, the 'throne of Satan,' at Pergamos. To take part in this idolatry was a civil duty of the first importance to a Roman citizen, and to a Christian it was the last and worst apostasy. Antipas, the faithful witness, had already paid the penalty of constancy at Pergamos itself: S. John had been driven from Ephesus to Patmos, where he wrote to warn the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia that they might expect similar oppression. But, indeed, the whole Apocalypse is full of the conviction that the empire and the Church have declared irreconcilable war on one another. There is reason for believing that this effort of Domitian to enforce the worship of the Augusti on the Church was not without some success. In the year A.D. 112, the Roman governor of Bithynia, Pliny the younger, writing to Trajan for advice[1] in dealing with Christians, speaks of some Bithynians accused of belonging to the Church who admitted that they had once been Christians, but affirmed that they had ceased to be so twenty years before: and these were doubtless the apostates of Domitian's time. There is evidence, then, that the years A.D. 93-96 were years of severe trial for the Church in various parts of Asia; but there is also proof that Rome also had its martyrs at this time. The Roman bishop Clement, began his letter to the Corinthians (A.D. 96 or 97) with a reference to the 'sudden and repeated calamities and disasters' which had just fallen upon the Christians of Rome: and this general reference can be confirmed by particular evidence.

Roman martyrs.—In A.D. 95 **Flavius Clemens**, one of the consuls, whose two sons Domitian had adopted, was put to death on a charge of 'atheism': his wife **Domitilla**, Domitian's niece, was banished, and many others suffered death or confiscation for 'adopting Jewish customs.'

[1] See below, p. 45.

Acilius Glabrio, consul in A.D. 91, was one of the victims of this attack. Now, the mention of atheism and Jewish customs together makes it fairly clear that all these persons were Christians; for the popular mind had not clearly disconnected Christianity from Judaism, and indeed could not rightly do so, while by 'atheism' is meant some overt act of hostility to established religion, and not a disbelief in the existence of gods. When we learn further that Flavius Clemens was accused of 'contemptible inactivity,' the probability of the argument is heightened, for rigid abstention from pagan observances would be just the point in which a Christian magistrate would have to make himself conspicuous. At this point, archæological discovery makes an even greater degree of certainty attainable than was the case with the trial of Pomponia Græcina. The 'cemetery of Domitilla' is one of the oldest Christian burial-places in Rome: the catacomb was dug out on ground granted for the purpose by Flavia Domitilla: the tomb of Domitilla's nurse is there, and other members or retainers of the Flavian family were buried in the same place. It may be added, that in the 'cemetery of Priscilla' there are inscriptions which prove that at least some members of the family of Acilius Glabrio also belonged to the Church.

In the year A.D. 96 Domitian was murdered. A passage in the *Apologeticus* of Tertullian asserts that before his death he repented, and restored those whom he had sent into exile. There is little doubt that this is a mistake: no improvement was seen either in administrative affairs in general or in the condition of the persecuted Christians until the reign of Nerva. The first business of the new emperor was to pacify Rome and to do away with the crowd of informers who had been allowed to destroy the security of social life. In the happy results of this reaction against the excesses of Domitian, the Christians had some share: they were left in peace so long as the hated memory of Domitian deterred men from any policy which might seem to reproduce the evils of his reign. Thus the epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, written at this time, speaks of the Church's sufferings rather in a tone of reminiscence: and S. John was

enabled to return from his exile in Patmos, and finished his long life in Ephesus.

Policy of Trajan.—Nerva reigned only two years, and was succeeded in A.D. 98 by a great administrative genius, the emperor Trajan. History supplies us with only two pieces of important evidence as to the position of Christians during the nineteen years of this reign.

1. **The letters of Ignatius.**—About A.D. 110 the bishop of Antioch in Syria, **Ignatius**, whose Christian name was Theophorus, was arrested on the charge of being a Christian, and was sent from Antioch to Rome to suffer in the amphitheatre. On this journey he passed through Philadelphia and stayed at Smyrna: here he was received by **Polycarp**, the bishop, with the rest of the Church; and as the news of his arrival spread rapidly over the Christian communities of the neighbourhood, deputed messengers came to visit him from Tralles, Magnesia, and Ephesus. Each of these took back a letter with him to the Church which had sent him; and when the old bishop had passed on to Troas, he sent back letters to Philadelphia, to the Church of Smyrna, and to Polycarp. He was then taken on towards Rome, whither he had already sent a letter begging the Church there to do nothing which might rob him of the glory of martyrdom.

These letters are of special importance for the history of the ministry. They show that in Asia the three orders of bishop, presbyter, and deacon were now firmly established, and that the administration and worship of each Church depended on the authority of a single officer to whom the presbyters were joined as assessors. They also throw some light on the history of persecution. We notice first the rapid and unhindered communication which was allowed to link the local Churches together. Ignatius' messengers and the Churches' deputies passed unchallenged, the bishop's friends were allowed free access to the prisoner. When the satirist Lucian relates how a religious impostor, Peregrinus, turned Christian for a time, he adopts almost the very language of the Ignatian letters to describe the zeal with which distant Churches hastened to pay honour to his hero when imprisoned for the faith he chose to profess.

Again, the passion of Ignatius for a martyr's death is expressed in language which shows how natural and necessary the conflict between Church and State already seemed: 'Christianity is a thing of might whensoever it is hated by the world,' and a disciple is not fully tested until he has fought the supreme fight of martyrdom. Direct references to the persecution are not frequent in Ignatius; but he mentions others who have gone before him on the same journey 'to the glory of God,' and speaks of Ephesus and Rome as pre-eminent in steadfastness: Ephesus is the 'high road of those who are on their way to die unto God,' and Rome is a Church that can teach because it has suffered.

2. **The correspondence of Pliny with Trajan.**—In the year A.D. 112 Plinius Secundus was in special charge of Bithynia. In the course of official business, he had occasion to refer many points of detail to the emperor: a collection of his letters has preserved for us both Pliny's problems and the answers sent by Trajan. Among these questions of police, drainage, water-supply, and the like, are found a letter and a rescript which deal with the imperial policy in regard to the Christians.

The Christians of Bithynia had become numerous: they were to be found not only in the cities, but also in the country districts. Their strength was so considerable that trade in fodder for sacrificial victims had seriously suffered. Pliny knew, of course, that there was a rule for dealing with these people, but he had never been present at any of their trials. When Christians were brought before him, he attempted to induce them to recant, and those who repeatedly refused were put to death. Owing to anonymous information, the number of cases became serious; two tests were proposed to each prisoner: he was asked to offer incense to the emperor's statue and to curse Christ. Pliny became uneasy as the seriousness of the business was made apparent; the more so, because, even after torturing two deaconesses, he could find nothing worse in Christianity than a 'wicked superstition' conjoined with practices of an innocent character. He therefore sent the matter up to the emperor, whose brief reply laid down the following

principles: (1) a hard and fast policy in this matter is impossible; (2) Christians, if convicted, must be punished; (3) if they recant, and 'worship our gods,' their past actions may be ignored. On the other hand, (4) they are not to be sought out; and (5) anonymous accusations are to be disregarded.

This rescript is regarded by early Christian authorities as a substantial gain to the Church: they remember Trajan as one who restored its security by rescuing it from the previous policy of systematic extermination. The instructions given to Pliny were probably similar to those sent to other governors; and if the effect of the general order had been to continue a policy as severe as that of Domitian, it is easy to see that Trajan would have been remembered along with Domitian and Nero as a chief enemy of the Church. The experience of Christians decided otherwise, and Trajan was thought of with gratitude as the initiator of a milder *régime*.

CHAPTER IV

JEWISH CHRISTIANITY

Jewish Christianity.—This expression, during the first few years of the Church's existence, would have been almost meaningless. There was then no Christianity that was not Jewish. Two hundred years later there was scarcely anything left that answered to the name. The vast majority of converts came then from the Gentile world, and were incorporated into a society from which Jewish observances, at least, had been almost wholly obliterated. We have now to give an outline of the way in which this great change was brought about.

The dispersion of the Apostles, and, later, the martyrdom of S. James (62), must have left comparatively few 'liberal' Christians in Jerusalem. That Church was composed in the main of people to whom S. Paul's wide conception of Christian liberty in relation to the Law was very unwelcome. The decision of the 'Council of Jerusalem,' co-operating with other circumstances, had made it impossible for their views to be imposed on communities of Gentile Christians; but it did not prevent the survival, in Palestine at least, and probably in many of the 'mixed' churches elsewhere, of the conviction that a Jew could never be set free from his allegiance to the Jewish Law. Hence, while the active conflicts reflected in the Epistles to the Galatians and Romans were never renewed, we often hear of efforts to import isolated points of Jewish observance, doctrine, and speculation into the Church.[1] Hence also, there

[1] Cf. especially the Epistle to the Colossians and the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

lived on in the church of Jerusalem and its descendants a type of Christianity which stood completely aloof from the life and development of the Gentile churches. For a few years after S. James's death, his people (governed, we are told, by Symeon, the son of Clopas) were able to maintain without disturbance the double life of Christian Judaism, keeping the worship of the Temple side by side with the 'gathering together' of the Christian society. But in 66 a desperate effort was made by Jewish patriots and fanatics to shake off the Roman yoke. The Roman garrison at Jerusalem was massacred, the Temple seized, the city prepared for a siege. In obedience to our Lord's command and warning, the Christian body fled from the place. Their chief place of refuge lay some distance to the north, in the Jordan valley, in a town of the Decapolis which its Macedonian founders had named after their own capital, Pella. By their flight they of course dissociated themselves from the nationalism of the revolters; and they must have felt that their share in the common hopes of their race was small. But the destruction of the Temple (A.D. 70) robbed them, as it robbed the whole nation, of only a part of their religious inheritance. Just as the school of Rabbis which gathered at Jamnia, near Joppa, was able to console itself with a new devotion to the interpretation of the Law, so also the Christians of Pella could still practise the life of legal observance. Very little can be discovered as to the details of their history during the rest of the century. In two instances the anxiety of the Roman Government to prevent a recurrence of the rebellion is said to have affected the Church. Search was ordered by Domitian for descendants of David, and two grandsons of Jude, the brother of the Lord, were brought before him. They were poor and simple farmers, whom no one could suspect of a desire to claim a restoration of the Davidic line; and on their confession that the kingdom of their aspirations was the Kingdom of Heaven, they were allowed to return unmolested to their farm. It is said, also, that in the reign of Trajan the aged bishop Symeon was betrayed by Jewish sectaries to the Government as a descendant of David, and put to death. If the story is

true, it must be explained by supposing that widespread conspiracies against Roman rule had by this time provoked repressive measures.

Jewish revolts against Rome.—Toward the end of Trajan's reign (in 115-6), the Jews of the dispersion contrived the first of two schemes which brought the most serious consequences both upon themselves and on the Christians of Palestine. During the absence of the emperor on the Parthian frontier, the great Jewish colonies of Egypt, Cyrene, and Cyprus rose in rebellion. Their example was quickly followed by those of Mesopotamia. In all those places great cruelty was used toward the other inhabitants. The matter was taken seriously, as it deserved: the revolts were suppressed with unsparing severity, and many thousands of Jews are said to have perished. The refusal of the Christian Jews to take part in these insurrections must have embittered their relations with the orthodox. The freedom with which they had once shared in the life of the local synagogues was by this time greatly curtailed: they began to be known as *Minim*, or heretics, they were accused of using magic for purposes of healing, and curses against Christ were introduced into the prayers.

The disturbances of 116 resulted six years later in a precautionary measure, which in the end provoked the nationalist spirit to a desperate and final effort. Hadrian resolved in 122 to rebuild Jerusalem as a settlement of Roman veterans under the name Aelia Capitolina. The site of the Temple was desecrated by temples of Venus and Jupiter Capitolinus. How long it took to carry out this plan we do not know; but in 131 the nationalist zeal for the recovery of the Holy City led to a general rising of the Jews of Palestine. The leader in this attempt was one Bar-Cochba, 'the son of a star,' a man well equipped for the part of a popular hero, who claimed that in him the prophecy 'there shall come a star out of Jacob' was fulfilled. This pretension was backed by the leading Jewish teacher of the time, the Rabbi Akiba, a subtle expounder of the minutest details of the Law, who had travelled east and west as a missionary in the cause of Jewish patriotism. With this support Bar-Cochba could

command both men and money in plenty. The Roman coinage current in Palestine was restamped, dated by the 'years of the liberation of Jerusalem,' and engraved with patriotic symbols. It was not until 135 that the Romans under Julius Severus, who had been summoned from Britain to take over the general command of the war, succeeded in reducing the strength of the insurgents to a single position, the fortified town of Bether, seven miles south-west of Jerusalem. Here, after a prolonged and desperate resistance, the revolt came to its inevitable end. The Jewish losses were enormous: the whole country was devastated, and great numbers of men, women, and children sold into slavery. After the revolt of 115, the Jews had been expelled from Cyprus and forbidden to return; it is said that even when driven on the coast by shipwreck many had been murdered by the Gentile inhabitants. A similar measure now excluded them from the Holy City, and the new Roman town of Aelia Capitolina had not one inhabitant whose faith had been centred in Jerusalem.

The results of this catastrophe were profound for Judaism and Christianity alike. Jewish nationalism had made its last effort, and failed. The restoration of Israel to political independence was now impossible, and from that time until now the Jews have acquiesced in the strange destiny which has made and kept them a 'Dispersion.' But although the visible centre of their unity was removed, there was and still is another bond which has triumphed over all the forces of dissipation—the bond of the Law. From the ruin of the Temple and City in A.D. 70 began the ascendency of the great teachers who interpreted the Torah by word of mouth to the scholars of the Rabbinical schools; from the disasters of A.D. 135 began a great literary work in which every detail of the Law was subjected to minute and casuistical discussion.

Decline of Jewish Christianity.—The history of Palestinian Christianity during the second and third centuries is very obscure. The great movements and the great men of the Church belong to other regions. The developments of thought which have had a permanent

effect on our religion came not from Palestine, but from great centres of Greek life, such as Alexandria or Antioch. The strip of country which lay between these two cities produced scarcely a single man whom the Church outside it has remembered. There are, however, records which show that in these isolated districts Jewish Christianity had a considerable and varied history. The Church of Jerusalem, driven in A.D. 66 into the Decapolis, never returned to its home, but became a centre of Christian teaching, especially for the districts that lay east of Jordan. With this exiled community the Gentile Church of Aelia Capitolina had no continuous connection. In the fourth century, indeed, when the name Jerusalem had recovered its proper meaning, the Christians of the place claimed continuity through a series of bishops with the earliest of all the Churches, and a special precedence was granted to their bishop in virtue of the sacred associations of his 'parish.' But the claim was really without foundation. Aelia in the second century was a purely Gentile Church, and stood quite apart from the Jewish types of Christianity which lived on in other parts of Palestine. A considerable part of the old Church of Jerusalem had, as we have seen, remained Judaistic in the strict sense: it had resented the liberalism of S. Paul who seemed to allow to Jew and Gentile a freedom which the Gentile ought not to demand and the true Hebrew could not accept. Now, even though the orthodoxy of the synagogues had finally repudiated Jesus Christ, a considerable proportion of the Palestinian Christians still tried to maintain the laws and usages of the religion by which they had been abjured. This obstinate legalism was quite impotent to conciliate the non-Christian Jews, and it formed a barrier between the Jewish churches and the communities of the larger Christian world. That isolation had a sinister influence on many of the Churches of Palestine. Although there was a remnant which held to the teaching of the New Testament in all essential points, a large number of converts lost in one way or another the true 'proportion of the faith.'

Pharisaic Ebionism.—Many shades of theological opinion

among Judaistic Christians bore the common name *Ebionite*. This adjective is not derived (as in the third century some writers already wished to derive it) from that of a teacher called Ebion, it simply represents a Hebrew word meaning *poor*, and in origin it was doubtless a title assumed by Christians from humility. But Ebionism became known not as a way of life, but as a doctrine. The pure or Pharisaic Ebionites held firmly to the old legal rites, to circumcision and the Sabbath, and their theology was equally Jewish. They believed in one God, and accepted Jesus Christ as the Messiah; but as they rejected the practical liberalism of S. Paul, so also they denied the creed on which it rested. They chose to think of Jesus Christ as a man specially endowed with supernatural gifts, a prophet more wonderful than the prophets, but differing from them only in degree. They had therefore no sympathy with those Christian books which spoke of Him as the Word of God made man, or as One Who, being in the form of God, humbled Himself and took the form of a servant; they rejected all the writings of S. Paul, and only used a Hebrew gospel which bore some resemblance to the Gospel according to S. Matthew. These 'Pharisaic' Ebionites were the natural heirs of S. Paul's earliest opponents, and their teaching was the natural outcome of the effort to compromise between the old covenant and the new.

Essene Ebionism.—Palestine produced another type of Ebionism, a doctrine far less simple. Pharisaic Ebionism was in fact not so much a theology as a refusal of theology. When Judaising Christians did set themselves to work out a religious philosophy, they found ready to their hand a Jewish philosophy with which it seemed easy to amalgamate their Christian beliefs. Reference has already been made (p. 12) to those ascetic communities of Jews called Essene, who rejected the idea of sacrifice, viewed the world of matter as essentially evil, and framed a complex doctrine of creating angels in order to relieve the supreme God from responsibility for its existence. Even in the apostolic age some efforts were made to bring these ideas within the circle of Christian thought; and in the second century, it

was the fate of many Ebionite Christians to exchange their simple Judaistic creed for a religion in which Essenism and Christianity were strangely blended. About the year 220, one Alcibiades of Apamea travelled to Rome in order to advocate this doctrine. He brought with him a book which Essene Ebionites appear to have received as a revelation—the 'book of Elchasai.' This book professed to date from the third year of Trajan (A.D. 100). Its practical purpose was to teach a repetition of baptism as a means of purification from sin; the sinner was to dip himself into water 'in the name of the mighty and most high God,' with an invocation to the 'seven witnesses' (sky, water, the holy spirits, the angels of prayer, oil, salt, and earth) and with a promise of amendment. This baptism not only procured remission of sins, but had a magical efficacy against disease. With this fantastic doctrine and certain astrological superstitions which accompanied it, were combined the Essene aversion to the eating of flesh and a form of the Ebionite view of Christ the Messiah. Christ, this book taught, was an angel born of common human parents; but His birth in Judæa was neither the first nor the last of his appearances: He had appeared, for instance, in Adam and in Moses; He was, however, only a prophet, and His coming did not abrogate any part of the Law. Circumcision was therefore still obligatory, and the doctrine of S. Paul must be renounced. This revelation claimed to represent a special communication given by Christ Himself, Who had appeared to Elchasai as an angel ninety-six miles high, accompanied by a female angel (the Holy Spirit) of similar dimensions.

The Clementine Romances.—Such grotesque fantasies found little acceptance in the West, but the popularity which the theology and morality underlying them gained in Palestine is attested by the recurrence of many similar features in the literature of the Clementine romance. The Clementine *Recognitions* and *Homilies* form two versions of an Ebionite work or compilation purporting to contain (1) the adventures of the Clement who was bishop of Rome at the end of the first century, and (2) the preaching of S. Peter and his

controversies with Simon Magus. The story of the *Recognitions* recounts how Clement's mother, twin brothers, and father had lost all trace of each other through domestic misfortunes, and by a series of strange coincidences were brought together again and finally united in the Christian faith. The discourses which this compilation includes are less innocent. In these, along with much that is Christian in the common sense, many of the elements of Essene Ebionism are to be found. Many critics have held that the 'Simon Magus' whom S. Peter overthrows in argument is but a thinly veiled portrait of S. Paul; and this assumption is suggested, though not justified, by the evident animus against Pauline doctrine which the Clementines display. In one passage, indeed, Simon Magus does adopt toward S. Peter language directly derived from the controversy between S. Peter and S. Paul, as described in Galatians ii. 11; and the preface to the *Homilies* speaks of the 'lawless and foolish doctrine that the obligations of the Mosaic Law are not perpetual,' and of the 'enemy' who had even represented S. Peter as adopting this error.

While the tone of the *Recognitions*, though markedly Ebionite, is that of a book from which many heretical elements have been removed, the *Homilies* present many coincidences with what is known of the book of Elchasai: the doctrine of successive incarnations, the rejection of sacrifice, the false asceticism, the fantastic doctrine of angels, and the invocation of the 'seven witnesses' all recur in them; it is plain, in fact, that the works from which they and the *Recognitions* are derived were part of the ordinary literature of the Essene Ebionites of Palestine in the second century.

This perverted and mutilated Christianity lived on, especially in the districts east of the Jordan, long after the conflict between Catholicism and Judaism had passed away. It lingered as late as A.D. 600, when Mohammed incorporated it into his new religion.

Orthodox Jewish Christians.—But the tendencies which produced Pharisaic and Essene Ebionism were not the only forces at work in the early Christianity of Palestine. Justin Martyr, writing about A.D. 150, distinguishes

three types of Judaistic Christians: (1) those Jews who keep the Law themselves, and also desire to enforce it on others; (2) those who keep the Law themselves, and yet do not attempt to impose on others the requirements of circumcision and Sabbath observance; (3) men of Gentile birth who have adopted and wish to enforce a rigorously Judaic life. There is reason to think that at any rate a minority of Palestinian Christians retained both the purity of the Christian creed and the comparative liberalism of Justin's second class. Obscure as this orthodox minority was, it produced in the second century two writers, Aristo of Pella and Hegesippus, from whom important evidence can be drawn as to the type of Christianity taught in the Churches from which they came. Aristo composed a dialogue on the witness of prophecy to Jesus Christ, which was orthodox enough to earn the approval of Origen. Of Hegesippus more is known. He was a Christian of Jewish origin, who wrote and travelled during the reigns of Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Commodus. He was the author of a treatise in five books which dealt with such topics as Paganism, heresy, Jewish Christianity, Christian literature, and the unity of Church doctrine; many fragments of these survive in the quotations of Eusebius, who drew much of his information about early Palestinian Church history and chronology from this source. Hegesippus made a journey about A.D. 150 from Palestine to Corinth and Rome. At Rome he drew up a list of Roman bishops, in order to show that there, as at Corinth, the continuity of the Church was a guarantee of its fidelity to apostolic orthodoxy. 'In each succession, and in every city, the doctrine is in accordance with that which the Law and the prophets and the Lord proclaim.' The evidence of this writer, then, leaves no room for doubt that the Palestinian Church from which he came was in all essentials Catholic. And although Ebionism came to predominate among the small and scattered communities of Hebrew Christians, yet even in the fourth century there remained a remnant which retained both its loyalty to Jewish tradition and its hold on the Catholic faith.

CHAPTER V

GNOSTICISM AND MONTANISM

Marcion.—The second sect which split off and organised itself apart from the Church owed its origin to a violent exaggeration of the Pauline attitude towards the Jewish Law. *Marcion,* a shipowner of Sinope in Pontus, came to Rome between A.D. 140 and 150, and there began to teach principles similar to those on account of which one *Cerdon* had not long before been excommunicated. Like the Gnostics, from whom in many ways he was quite distinct, Marcion was a dualist, that is, he believed matter and spirit to be essentially antagonistic: the material world was the sphere of evil, and could not be the creation of a good God. Hence he asserted the existence of two divine Beings: the supreme God, 'the God of the spirits of all flesh,' made known to us through Jesus Christ, and a lower Power, the Creator, the Lord of the Jewish dispensation. The Jewish God was only just; hence He and His people were quite devoid of the higher virtues: the saints of the Old Testament were from the Christian standpoint evil men. But the supreme God was good; and His goodness could only be shared by those who recognised that the God and the Law of the old covenant must be repudiated absolutely. From these principles Marcion argued that the Church of his day was in need of a radical anti-Judaic reform; and as the Roman Church refused to follow his lead, he founded a separate church, organised under bishops and presbyters after the Catholic model. The Marcionite doctrine of the Person of Christ was shaped to fit their dualistic theory: Christ, they said, came down from the

good God to deliver men from the Demiurgus or Creator; He therefore came not in a material body, but as a phantasm, descending to teach in Capernaum in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. It was of course impossible for men who held these views to accept the New Testament as a whole; and Marcion did not hesitate to prepare for his sect a canon of his own, consisting of a mutilated version of S. Luke, together with ten of the Pauline epistles, from which all that sanctioned the Old Testament had been removed.

During the second and third centuries Marcionism was vigorous and successful; its adherents lived a strictly ascetic life and were conspicuous for their constancy under persecution; and although in the fourth century Constantine attacked them with oppressive legislation, and in the fifth a natural affinity for the teaching of the Manichæans drew many of them off to that powerful sect, yet as late as A.D. 692 they occupied the attention of a council, and even in the middle ages they had not entirely ceased to exist.

The origin of Gnosticism.—The New Testament makes it clear that the teaching of the Apostles was very soon taken up and distorted by various forms of Jewish religious philosophy (*cf.* p. 26). The radical principle of these distortions was always a belief in the essentially evil nature of matter. To this was due the denial that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh (1 S. John iv. 2, etc.), the elaboration of theories about the place of angels in the universe (Col. ii. 18), the rejection of marriage, and the assertion that the new birth of the soul was the only resurrection (2 Tim. ii. 18). These speculations were the forerunners of a series of movements which in the second century threatened to overwhelm the Christian world and pervert its creed into a Pagan philosophy. Antioch and Alexandria were the two centres in which these movements took shape.

The early anti-heretical writers, from Irenæus onwards, traced the origin of all heresy back to **Simon Magus**, the false Messiah of Samaria. Simon pretended to be an incarnation of the supreme God (cf. Acts viii. 10), and took about with him, it is said, a woman called Helena,

in whom he asserted that a female divine principle was enshrined. Jesus Christ was, according to Simon, merely an earlier manifestation of the supreme Power. Simon's disciple *Menander* is said to have transplanted this doctrine to Antioch. It is, however, impossible to trace the real genesis of the kaleidoscopic systems which we call Gnostic; they do not emerge into clear light before the early decades of the second century. There were then in Syria adherents both of Menander and of another heresiarch, *Saturninus*; while in Alexandria **Basilides** (probably about 120-130) and **Valentinus** were the creators of systems not fundamentally different from those of the Syrian Gnostics, but more Hellenic in character and more completely dissociated from Judaism. Valentinus came to Rome in the middle of the century—precise dates cannot be given—and the influence of his sect reached even to the Euphrates valley, where **Bardesanes** (b. about 150) became the leader of a school of Eastern Valentinians; while *Ptolemæus* and *Herakleon* (the earliest commentator on S. John) were the chief lights of the Western or Italian school. These are the chief names in the more prominent Gnostic schools; but beside these, the intellectual ferment of the time produced a great number of other leaders and sections, each with its peculiar characteristics, and all agreeing only in the fact that the chief impetus of their intellectual life came from regions alien to the original character of the Church.

It is almost impossible for us to disentangle the complexities of the various Gnostic systems as the anti-heretical writers present them. Very little Gnostic literature has been allowed to survive: a work known as *Pistis Sophia*, consisting of instructions purporting to have been given by our Lord to His disciples during the first eleven years after the resurrection, is extant in a Coptic translation; and a Syriac *Hymn of the Soul*, written at the beginning of the third century by a disciple of Bardesanes, is a beautiful relic of Gnosticism at its best. Of anti-gnostic writers, *Irenæus* of Lyon (A.D. 180) and *Hippolytus* of Rome (about A.D. 225) are the most considerable; a work of *Epiphanius* of Salamis (d. A.D. 404) is also extant: it is called *Panarion*, or 'the

bread-basket,' and describes a very great variety of heresies, but is of little value except where it is based on the work of Hippolytus.

We shall here neglect the differences between the various forms of Gnosticism, and deal only with two points: (1) the main Gnostic principles, (2) the influence of these movements upon the Church.

The main principles of Gnosticism.—*Gnosis* means knowledge, and the whole of Gnosticism rests on an exaggeration of the importance of knowledge in the sphere of religion. The Church exists in order that men may be made able to overcome evil. The Gnostics asked, what and whence is evil? and the whole of their creed was subordinated to the answer. Man, they said, has a foot in each world: he is a spirit, but he is confined here in a material body. The spirit and the body are at war with one another, and the victory of the body over the spirit is a victory of evil over good. How is it that the spirit has come into these degrading conditions? If God is responsible for this, He cannot be called good; and if He must be good, then some other than He must be the maker and ruler of this material world in which evil dwells. The Gnostics thus demanded a theory of the universe as a prelude to religion. They mostly agreed in supposing that there has existed eternally one ineffable Being; from this Being a series of powers or æons have come into existence, in such a way, however, as to form, not one equal world of spirits, but a series of spheres of existence, each further removed than the last from the supreme Being, and less capable of knowing Him and its own relation to Him. The material world is the product of the last of this series, and the evil in it is really a kind of darkness which hides from material beings their true place in the universe and their proper distance from the Source of all things. At this point Gnosticism begins to come into contact with the Christian revelation. Man is not mere matter: he has in him a spark, as it were, of the eternal Light, and this spark, his spirit, is capable of being redeemed from the prison-house of bodily evil. The Redeemer is One Who comes from the Father of all, and passing through all grades of being

restores to each its proper perfection. To us He came in an apparent body, and seemed to suffer and die; He came to put away our ignorance, and to bring us the knowledge of what we truly are. In an old Gnostic hymn Christ is made to say to the Father: 'I will open to them all mysteries; I will show them the forms of divine things; I will deliver to them the knowledge of the secrets of the holy way.'

There was certainly much poetic beauty of thought in these conceptions, though it was often overlaid by the grotesque fantasies, borrowed largely from Oriental sources, by which the emanation of the æons and their mutual relationships were depicted. But the chasm which separated this form of thought from the common Christian faith was deep and wide. Two points are of essential importance: (*a*) Christianity is universal; Gnosticism was exclusive. *Gnosis* was not even offered to all. Men were divided into three classes — the spiritual, the psychic, and the material: *gnosis* was said to be the natural prerogative of the first; the second consisted of common Churchmen, who were capable of reaching knowledge if they sought it; for the third no redemption was possible. Thus the initiated members of the Gnostic schools regarded themselves as occupying a plane which common men could not reach. (*b*) With this anti-Christian exaltation of the intellect went an equally false depreciation of the will. To be saved meant only to be illuminated. The Gnostic Gospel could bring no strength to the weak, simply because by treating sin as ignorance, and by ascribing essential badness to matter, it missed the whole truth of moral responsibility. Our consciousness tells us that evil is not a deficiency in the mind, but a defection of the will, and that we need not only knowledge but the power to avoid sinning against knowledge. A curious result of the Gnostic doctrine of moral evil was that it led to two quite opposite results: some Gnostics betook themselves to a strictly ascetic life, as enemies of the flesh; others, holding that flesh and spirit were so different and distinct that no acts of the body could have any effect on the higher element, treated morality as unnecessary.

The Relation of Gnosticism to the Church.—The separatist sects of the early Church were products of movements which began within the Church itself: they were offshoots of Catholicism. The Gnostic movement, on the other hand, was essentially Pagan in its origin, a foreign growth which gradually attached itself to the Church. But for the unique importance ascribed by the Gnostics to Jesus Christ, it might be said that the Christian elements in their teaching were almost accidental. A sect driven by irreconcilable divergence of views to break off from the Church would have been a far less menacing phenomenon than the Gnostic schools, which for the most part adhered to the Church, and professed merely to teach a truer and deeper form of the creed. The leaders of these schools were able and sometimes learned men; and their offers of intellectual satisfaction must have appealed with great force to the ambitions of the educated.

In answer to those who were repelled by the novelty of their views, they put forward an audacious claim: they pretended that the Apostles themselves had preached two forms of Christianity, the lower of which corresponded to the common creed, while the higher had been handed down as a secret deposit. Basilides thus professed to teach an esoteric doctrine which his master Glaucias had derived from S. Peter, and Valentinus claimed a similar connection through one Theodas with S. Paul.

The apostolic writings show, of course, no trace of such an esoteric tradition; but this did not debar the Gnostics from claiming their support. Below the plain sense of the letter of the Scriptures, they claimed the right to see a hidden meaning; and the fatal facility of allegorical interpretation enabled them to find Scriptural reasons for quite un-Scriptural teaching; as Irenæus says, they picked to pieces the mosaic of Scripture, and made it up into pictures of their own designing. To these abuses of the authority and writings of the Apostles the Gnostic movement added a considerable literary activity: numerous apocryphal Gospels and Acts (notably a collection of Gnostic Acts, formed by one

Leucius Charinus) belong to the 'countless number of spurious scriptures' which Irenæus ascribes to it.

The life of the Gnostic associations appealed to the emotions as well as the intellect. Like the contemporary Pagan mysteries, it was full of secret and symbolic rites; many of these were believed to have magical efficacy against the powers of evil. Some of the sects baptized the initiated with oil or water, using incomprehensible formulæ; others subjected them to the form of a 'spiritual marriage,' or branded them on the right ear. The prelude to the highest *gnosis* in one sect was a 'mystery of the forgiveness of sins,' through which the remission of all sins, past, present, and future, was assured.

With these allurements for the intellect and the emotions, Gnosticism seems to have stood between Paganism and Christianity, offering to effect a compromise between them. The Christianity which it offered to the heathen world was essentially heathen in character: it might therefore have found wide acceptance if the Church had chosen to make use of it. But the Church in fact repudiated the alliance, and treated the Gnostics —with perfect justice—as foreign invaders. The crushing of this invasion has been compared to the process by which a healthy body gets rid of the germs of disease; and the analogy is apt, for the failure of Gnosticism was everywhere due to the simple vitality of the Catholic tradition. The greatest anti-gnostic writers, Irenæus in Gaul, Tertullian in Africa, Hippolytus in Rome, did their work after the real crisis had gone by; in the critical period—the first two-thirds of the second century —the tenacity with which common Christians held on to that which they had received, had already made the failure of the Gnostic innovations inevitable.

As a consequence of this, the positive influence of these great movements upon the Church was astonishingly small. Between the Gnostic mysteries and some later conceptions of the sacraments, between the Gnostic separation of the Divinity from the Humanity of Christ, and the 'two natures' of the Catholic creed, there is a certain resemblance but no historical connection. The

influence of Gnosticism was in fact strictly negative. In using the faith and the apostolic writings against heresy, the Church became more clearly aware of its creed and its Scriptures. The Gnostics preached a false spiritualism and made war on the Old Testament: the only result was a clearer doctrine of the Incarnation and an increase of interest in Jewish prophecy. They sought to discredit the current expectations of our Lord's Second Advent, and encouraged their followers to make terms with Paganism in time of persecution; they only succeeded in stimulating and popularising the movement of enthusiasm and rigorism which took its name from the Phrygian prophet Montanus.

Montanism.—At the time when the ferment of Gnosticism was beginning to subside, a movement within the Church began to re-assert the very elements of Christian life which the Gnostics had depreciated. **Montanus** was a Phrygian, an ex-priest of Cybele, it was said, and about 156 he began to proclaim the beginning of a new era. The Father, he said, had been known to the Jews; the Incarnation revealed the Son; the last age, that of the Paraclete, was now to come. A new revelation was to be given: the Spirit would take possession of the prophets, His mouthpieces, in such a way that their ecstatic utterances would reveal His will directly. Such a passive organ of the Spirit, Montanus, with the prophetesses **Prisca** and **Maximilla**, claimed to be. His ideal was to dissociate the Church from the world, and to form a community of true saints who should reject all secular ties and await the near approach of the Second Advent. In Pepuza and Tymion, two villages of Phrygia, this 'new Jerusalem' was organised.

Montanism came at an opportune moment. The severity of persecution seemed everywhere a presage of the coming end, while the expansion of the Church had brought with it enough moral laxity to pave the way for a Puritan reaction. The 'new prophecy' was therefore not slow to find adherents outside Phrygia in Asia Minor, Thrace, Rome, Gaul, and Africa. But the Church had not forgotten the prophetic *charisma* of the apostolic age; in Asia the gift had been exercised by Quadratus

and Ammia as late as the end of Trajan's reign. The frenzied utterances of the Montanists were felt to infringe the precept, 'the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.' Accordingly, their claim to possess a new and paramount authority was at once challenged. Some of the clergy attempted to expel the 'new spirit' by exorcism: it was discussed by synods of bishops (a new institution), and combated by eminent writers, such as Apollinarius of Hierapolis, Miltiades, and Melito of Sardis. In A.D. 177, news of the disturbing influence of the Montanists caused the imprisoned brethren of Lyon to write a letter to the churches of Asia and Phrygia, and to send Irenæus as their messenger to Eleutherus, bishop of Rome. But although Montanism was widely felt to be irregular, it was not formally repudiated; those who sympathised with it were not forced into schism before the beginning of the third century. If the disorders of Pepuza and Tymion had disfigured the movement elsewhere, the breach with the Church must have come much sooner. But the influence of the Montanists in the west was greatest after A.D. 180, when the last of the Phrygian prophets was already dead: Montanism was then little more than a zealous reforming movement, which seemed more likely than common Christianity to promote spiritual freedom and purity of life. To this promise it owed its greatest convert, **Tertullian** of Carthage (A.D. 160-230), the first great African Father. Tertullian was a vehement and uncompromising enthusiast, who felt deeply the need of a militant and purified Church which would make no terms with heathenism without or human frailty within. In A.D. 202, the Roman bishop Zephyrinus, after some hesitation, refused to communicate with the Asiatic Montanists; not long after this Tertullian, whose sympathies had long been with the zealots, seceded from the Church, and the Montanists of Carthage became a separated sect. The sect was orthodox in doctrine, and apart from its respect for the 'new prophecy' and its disrespect for the clergy, differed from the Church only in the strictness of its observances. Thus it refused to allow absolution for deadly sins committed after baptism, treated

second marriages as sinful, required scrupulous abstinence from contact with heathen customs, forbade its members to escape from persecution. To the ordinary fasts on Wednesday and Friday it added other compulsory times of fasting. The Church had come to see a distinction in these matters between what was necessary for all and what was good in special cases, and to enjoin a stricter rule on the clergy than on the laity. The Montanists rejected this distinction, and their ideal of the Church was hostile to clericalism. They made, in fact, a vigorous attack on the established Church order, setting up a 'Church of the Spirit' and 'spiritual men' in opposition to the existing clergy: divine grace, they said, comes not through bishops and priests as such, but through the unfettered descent of the Spirit upon individuals. Thus they were far from denying the Church's authority to declare absolution, but they held that it could be exercised only by men, whether clerical or lay, who had direct relation with the Spirit as *prophets*.

The seriousness and fervour of the Montanists taught the Church a useful lesson at a critical time. They were moved by the same desire for perfection that has created all the great movements of reformation. But at a certain point they ceased to be true reformers: they began by trying to lift the Church, but ended by despairing of it. They started as apostles of freedom: prophecy was to save the Church from a stereotyped tradition, to substitute the liberty of the Spirit for the rule of an official class, to put the genuine voice of conscience in the place of a conventional moral code. Yet their new order brought not liberty so much as a change of masters; it subjected men to the arbitrariness of prophetic ecstasy and to a rigour that made no allowances for human weakness. The result was, that whatever was really novel in Montanism soon ceased to exercise real influence upon the Church.

CHAPTER VI

APOLOGISTS OF THE SECOND CENTURY

The Church about A.D. 100.—After seventy years of missionary work, the Church had struck its roots both deep and wide in the soil of the empire. In *Palestine* the disastrous revolt of A.D. 66 had driven the Christians of Jerusalem northward, and scattered them among the small towns of the Jordan valley and Peræa; while in the Greek cities of the coast, and especially in Cæsarea, the headquarters of imperial administration, strong Gentile churches were growing up. In *North Syria* Antioch was still the most important centre; and as it had sent out the earliest missionaries westward, so again its enterprise pushed out eastward in the second century, and even crossed the Roman frontier to found churches in and near Edessa. In Asia Minor the Church can be traced at all the most important cities round the three coasts; and in the case of Bithynia, a positive record is preserved of the movement by which the influence of these city churches radiated over the surrounding districts. 'The contagion of this superstition,' wrote Pliny in 112, 'has penetrated not only the cities, but also the villages and the country.' Of the cities on the western coast, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Sardis were the most prominent in Christian history. Ephesus, to which S. Paul's long residence had given a peculiar importance, became afterwards the home of the Apostle S. John, who lived on there till the end of the first century. The written record of his teaching, and the traditions of those who learned from him there, became the standard of Asiatic Christianity. From S. John, indeed, and his doctrine of the Word Incarnate, all that was best in the

theology of the earliest ages drew its inspiration. In connection with the 'School of S. John,' Papias of Hierapolis, Polycarp of Smyrna (pp. 82-85), Melito of Sardis (p. 88) are representative Asiatic names; and one of the chief distinctions of the church of *Smyrna* is the fact that its commercial connection with the west was the means by which the Johannine type of Christianity was carried into Southern Gaul, where Pothinus (p. 89) and Irenæus of Lyon are to be reckoned as great pupils of the disciples of S. John.

Moving further west, we find the Pauline churches of *Greece* still flourishing, and pre-eminent among them the church of Corinth, which maintained close relationships with those of Athens, Lacedæmon, and the cities of Crete. In *Italy* there is no trace, at least in the earlier part of the second century, of any Latin-speaking church, nor indeed of any church at all, except in Rome and its neighbourhood. In the western half of the Mediterranean, the origins of Christianity are obscure. A phrase in the letter of Clement to the Corinthians suggests that S. Paul may have made his way towards Spain; but although Churches existed in the Peninsula before A.D. 200, none of them were reckoned as apostolic foundations. Proconsular Africa, with its capital Carthage, had some seventy parishes by the beginning of the third century, and must therefore have received its earliest missionaries (probably from Rome) many years before. Cyrene, on the other hand, owed its Christianity, which can be traced as far back as A.D. 150, not to Rome, but to Egypt. There in the Delta were churches of great antiquity: that of Alexandria was even old enough to claim S. Mark as its founder.

The various books of apocryphal Acts assert that the Apostles, before leaving Jerusalem, agreed to draw lots for the assignment of a missionary province to each. Among the results of this division were the travels of S. Thomas in Parthia or India, and of S. Bartholomew in Arabia. 'India' was doubtless a vague expression, and meant little more than 'the far East'; but the rumours of early Christianity in Arabia are so persistent, and the Jewish colonies on the Persian Gulf were so

considerable, that the apocryphal 'sortitio provinciarum' may perhaps in this case rest on some foundation of fact. As for those parts of the empire which have not been mentioned, such as Britain and the regions of the Danube, it is indeed probable that the legions which held them numbered some Christians in their ranks; but no trace of organised native churches can be found, so that it is roughly correct to think of second-century Christianity as confined to the Mediterranean world. Within that area, a century of missions had established not merely a number of local churches, but also a single Catholic Church, united alike in the life of faith which inspired it and in hostility to the evils of the Pagan world.

Literary defence of Christianity.—The second age of the Church was a period of great expansion and greater conflicts. There were conflicts internal to the Church: the Christian creed and life were interpreted in novel ways—from the side of the intellect by Gnosticism, and from that of the conscience by Montanus and his followers. We are now to deal with a new phase of the external warfare of the Church. The imperial policy of repression was allied in the second century with the forces of educated opinion; and as the philosophers began to treat the Creed as a rival philosophy, Christian writers began to accept the challenge of their criticism. The age of the 'Apologists,' as these defensive writers are called, begins with the reign of Hadrian (117-138); the last and greatest of the Apologies, the *Treatise against Celsus*, was published by Origen in 249. In the eight books of this work, Origen made an elaborate answer to a criticism of Christianity, the *True Word* of Celsus, which had appeared some eighty years before. Celsus was certainly the ablest anti-Christian thinker of the second century. Besides the mere ill-will and prejudice which most of the apologists had to combat, he confronted his enemy the Church with historical and philosophical arguments which have not even now lost all their force. A few points in this polemic may be selected as typical. Celsus' own creed was a curious compromise. His theory was that of a Platonist: he believed in one ineffable Being whom he called God and Providence;

but he held that the knowledge of this Being was possible for none but philosophers. He quoted with approval a sentence from the *Timæus* of Plato: 'It is a hard thing to find out the Maker and Father of this universe; and after having found him, it is impossible to make him known to all.' He was conscious that the essence of religion was 'never to lose our hold on God in word or in deed': and yet he adhered in practice to the common forms of polytheism. He asserted the existence of subordinate spirits, to whom it was proper to discharge duties of piety: proper, because these things were in their nature divine, and because such a worship was established by custom, and could not be neglected without disloyalty. The worship of one only God was therefore wrong in itself; and, moreover, those who professed it were insincere, for Christianity was, in fact, the worship of two Gods.

Celsus thus attempted to make the best both of philosophy and of common sense; he attacked the Christian creed as repugnant to both. In practice he disliked it, because it was not respectable. Like conjurers in the market-place, Christian teachers gathered round them an audience of foolish and disreputable persons, slaves, women and children. Whereas the heralds of the mysteries summon only those who are pure and just to be initiated, the Christian invitation is addressed to sinners, to uneducated men, to children, to all who are miserable. In theory, he regarded it as a bad philosophy pretending to rest on a history which was really fictitious. An Incarnation of God was impossible. Why should the human race think itself so superior to bees, ants, and elephants, as to be put in this unique relation to its Maker? Why, again, should the Jews be regarded as a specially favoured people, so that God should choose to come to men as a Jew? Celsus thought it more reasonable to hold that each part of the world had its own special deity: he was ready to admit that prophets and supernatural messengers had appeared in more places than one. He was therefore specially bitter against the claim of Christianity to be the universal religion, and specially anxious to bring contempt upon

the birth, teaching, and life of its Founder. He repeated a Jewish calumny which attributed a shameful origin to Jesus Christ; and adopting for the moment the standpoint of a Jew, argued that nothing in His life corresponded with the Jewish messianic expectations. The real Jesus Christ, he said, was a sorcerer, a criminal, who was punished by scourging and crucifixion: the genealogies of the gospels were invented as a cloak for the baseness of his origin and character. Moreover, from the beginning to the end his life was a failure. He may have predicted his end, but he could not inspire enough loyalty in the few sailors and tax-gatherers who followed him, to save himself from it. He was not strong enough in supernatural gifts even to disappear from the cross on which he suffered; and yet Christians were ready to believe that such a man as this rose from the grave. Perhaps he did not die at all, but only fell into a trance for a day or two; at any rate, the story of his reappearance rested only on the evidence of one poor woman and a few of his intimate companions. How could such a marvel as the Resurrection, if it really happened, have remained unnoticed? Would not the victorious Jesus have shown himself everywhere to convince the world?

Such are a few of the objections by which an unsympathetic reader of the gospels in the second century could justify his contempt for the faith and life of the Church. To many of them Origen was able to make an effective answer; but such men as Celsus were not likely to be affected by argument: he was too completely alien from the spirit of Christianity to feel the force of the moral facts by which his position was really made untenable. The apologists, who were for the most part hardly able to deal effectively with technical questions of philosophy, could at least take unassailable ground when they appealed to the lives of weak and sinful men whom the fellowship of Christ had really transformed.

The Christian defence: Quadratus and Aristides.—The earliest apology was that of *Quadratus*, who presented his work to Hadrian in 126 or 127, when the emperor was visiting Athens. Nothing remains of this treatise except a small fragment, in which Quadratus points to the real

and permanent effect of the miracles of our Lord: some of those whom He healed lived on, Quadratus says, to his own time. Another Athenian, *Aristides*, in the time either of Hadrian or of Antoninus Pius, wrote a defence of the faith which was well-known in the fourth century, but had since disappeared, and was only re-discovered in 1889. In the meanwhile, this apology had had one most remarkable adventure. A Christian romance, called the story of Barlaam and Josaphat, which was really based on a very old Buddhist legend, contains a speech put into the mouth of one Nachor, whose part in the story is to assume the rôle of a feeble apologist, and so to prevent Josaphat from becoming a Christian. Nachor, however, is forced against his will to make so powerful a defence of the faith that both he and Josaphat are converted. In 1890, it was discovered that this speech of Nachor was nothing else than the Apology of Aristides. It is in reality an attack on the current forms of Pagan belief, combined with a sober and beautiful defence of the life which Christians lead.

Justin Martyr.—The work of *Justin* the martyr is of greater importance. Justin was a native of Flavia Neapolis, the ancient Sichem. Born about the year 100, he was driven abroad in early manhood by the unsettled state of the country, which was then ripening for the rebellion of Bar-Cochba (p. 49). He had received the normal education of a Greek, but his thirst for real knowledge drove him from one school of philosophy to another in search of enlightenment. Platonism alone gave him real hope: 'the contemplation of ideas,' he says, 'furnished my mind with wings, so that I expected soon to have the vision of God.' At Ephesus, however, he fell in with an old man whose conversation carried him beyond Plato to the Jewish prophets, and from the prophets to Christ. After his conversion he travelled to Rome, and there became a teacher—not a missionary preacher in the old sense, but a teacher of the Christian philosophy. He still wore the cloak of a philosopher; and when he appeared as a defender of the faith, he did so, not as the opponent of reason, but as its champion. He did good work in Christian controversy, writing

against Marcion and the Gnostics; but of his writings only three remain: (1) an apology addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius, (2) a shorter apology addressed to the Roman Senate, (3) a dialogue with the Jew Trypho. The last of these contains the story of his conversion, but is mainly taken up with the subjects we should expect to find discussed in an argument with a Jew. Justin shows that it is possible to disregard the ceremonial law without denying its divine origin; that the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, all of them historical facts, had been predicted in the very Scriptures in which the Jews professed belief; and that the old covenant, with its narrow particularism, was never meant to be permanent, but had been superseded by a new covenant open to Gentile and Jew alike: the old must therefore be abandoned; the Jew must find his home in the new Israel of God.

The brief **Second Apology** was called forth by a shameless episode of persecution, and by Justin's apprehension that he himself would soon be attacked. The wife of a magistrate had been converted: her revolt against the profligacies of her old life had enraged the husband, who proceeded both against his wife and her teacher, and had them put to death. Justin himself had made an enemy of one Crescens, a philosopher of the sect of Cynics; on his philosophy Justin pours contempt, just as the satirist Lucian ridiculed the sect at large: he had disputed with him, and found him both ignorant and inaccessible to conviction. Justin suspected the man of malice, and wrote an appeal to the senate for justice. The Christians, he says, so far from being the cause of social evil, form the only pure element in a corrupt world: they are hated —and Christ was hated—for the same reason which has set the world at enmity with all its best teachers, namely, that their life is guided by the indwelling of the Divine Word, whom the evil world cannot but hate. They are allowed to suffer for discipline and probation, not for punishment; the crimes with which they are charged are those from which none but they are free. Moreover, their strength in suffering should weigh—Justin says that it had weighed with him in his Pagan days—in

their favour: sensual men could not leave the world with so little reluctance. Justin therefore begs that this defence may be published: he asks only for fair judgment, and for the admission that Christian doctrine is not a unique moral monstrosity, or parallel to the most despicable forms of current sensuality, but worthy to be compared with and set above the highest thought of the time.

The **First Apology** is of unique interest, on account of the remarkable frankness with which it publishes aspects of Christian truth and practice which no apologetic writer but Justin ever thought it well to divulge. Three broad questions are raised and discussed: (1) Why should Christians be treated as criminals? (2) What is Christian belief? (3) What is Christian practice? In answering the first of these questions, Justin pleads that crime means action, not opinion; and if the actions of Christians are examined, though some wrong-doing may be brought home to individuals, it will be found that the Christian, as such, is neither atheist nor immoral: he is one who lives under the eye of God and renders Him a reasonable service. The teaching of his Master enjoins pure living, and (though evil spirits misrepresent it) makes for civil obedience: the kingdom to which he aspires is heavenly, and its subjects are the best friends an earthly king could wish to have; expecting the Resurrection and the Judgment, they turn away from everything which makes judgment terrible.

Next, the Christian *doctrine* is not without its parallel in Pagan belief: the mythologies are full of 'sons of the gods'; we believe in one Son of God, of whom we recount no wicked fables. What we say of Him can be shown to be the fulfilment of prophecy, and to rest on revelations far older than any in the Greek mythology; we can prove that this is the only Son of God, His Word and First-begotten, the Saviour of the whole race of men; and that the Pagan creed is full of 'anticipations' designed by the enemies of man's welfare to discredit the Christian revelation. Here there is no trace of reserve; the doctrine of the Incarnation is candidly stated, and the Old Testament appealed to without apology to support

it. But this spirit of candour is even more strikingly shown in the third part of the book. There Christian *worship* is described,[1] 'for fairness' sake,' as Justin says, that his defence may not be thought to gloze over awkward subjects. First Baptism is described, then the Sunday Eucharist; and Justin appeals to the emperor for fair treatment with a final dilemma: 'this is our worship—if it is reasonable, honour it; if foolish, despise it; but do not persist in treating as criminals men against whom nothing like crime can fairly be charged.'

It is important to notice the dispassionate tone of these three works. The Dialogue with Trypho is not such an argument as could have contented S. Paul, for instance. The Jewish interlocutor is no zealot or proselytiser: he approaches Justin and his ideas with the respect due from one philosopher to another, is glad to get information, learns more than he expected, and would like to hear more. And Justin himself, though permeated with conviction, has caught much of the accent of the schools. While more ardent spirits, as we shall see, had eyes only for the grossness of the Pagan world, Justin is eager to claim kinship to Christ for all that has ever been good and true outside the Church. 'Whatever any one has truly spoken belongs to us Christians'; Pagan thinkers and legislators 'were able to see realities darkly through the scattered seed of the implanted Word that was in them.' It would not be true to say that Justin lowers Christian truth to the level of secular science; on the contrary, he conceives of wisdom and the love of wisdom as the highest activity of the human soul, 'a great possession and most honourable in the sight of God, to Whom it leads us.' This insight places Justin on a level with the best Christian thinkers of the early Church; it allies him in particular with the great men of Alexandria, Clement and Origen, whose breadth of culture endowed them with a generous vision of the manifold though partial revelations by which God had prepared the Hellenic world for Christ.

Aristides, Justin, Melito of Sardis (about A.D. 175),

[1] For a further reference to Justin's description, see p. 129.

Athenagoras (between A.D. 176 and 180), stand together as 'phil-Hellenic' apologists: their attitude to non-Christian philosophy, as philosophy, is what we should call liberal.

Militant apologists: Tatian.—A different standpoint was taken by Justin's pupil *Tatian*, and, among others, the great African father *Tertullian*. Tatian was a native of Mesopotamia, an Assyrian. He came to Rome in the middle of the second century, and became a pupil of Justin. He was, we should judge, a man of violent and impulsive temperament; and, like Tertullian, in his later years he found ordinary Churchmen too little inclined to wage desperate war against the world, and joined a puritan sect pledged to abstinence from flesh, wine, and marriage. Of his writings, the work which gave him real importance was a Harmony of the Four Gospels, or **Diatessaron**, which had a wide circulation, especially in Syria and Mesopotamia, and even supplanted the separate gospels as a liturgical book. He also wrote two or three theological treatises, which were much respected by his contemporaries: these have perished, and the only work of his now extant is an **Address to Greeks**, which is so far 'apologetic' or 'defensive' that it aims at establishing the reasonableness of the faith as against the absurdities of Greek thought and religion. In tone, however, it is not in the least defensive; it lashes unsparingly the immorality of the old myths: it says of the old gods, not that they do not exist, but that they are in reality demons (an idea common among Christians at the time); they have power, but merely a malignant power, which has given to God's whole handiwork an appearance of evil; they are worshipped only by the wicked who need them to minister to their corrupt passions. As for the philosophers, past and present, Tatian has no respect for them: alike in teaching and in life, they are found ridiculous. Plato was a gourmand, Aristotle a flatterer; Stoics and Cynics are equally empty of wisdom. Tatian tells how he has gone through the Pagan world and found its wisdom mere words, its gods and worship wicked, its legislation lawless; and has turned to certain barbaric writings, in which he has found an older religion and an older philosophy. This is the truth that God is One,

and has given to man both freedom and a law, through which he may win immortality. The Word of God has dwelt in a human body; and those who approach God through him have the Spirit of God dwelling in them to enlighten them. This union with God is man's true end, the hidden treasure which only Christians find. Such thoughts as these are scattered up and down this rather incoherent treatise, which is a strange mixture of blindness and insight. It must be regarded, however, with all its lack of balance, as expressing a profound truth. The real beauty of Greek thought and religion had never had the power to purify common life; it had been felt only by the few. Tatian looked only at its practical results, and saw that beneath the chaos of opinions and the wreckage of mythology, there lay no conviction that worked for righteousness. It was therefore just to ask what Paganism meant for common men, and so to judge it at its worst, and contrast it violently with a creed that offered the best to all, and put the highest life within the reach of even the lowest of fallen men.

Minucius Felix.—The earliest Christian document in the Latin language is also an 'apology'—the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix. Minucius was probably a native of the Roman colony of Cirta in Numidia; like the other African fathers, Cyprian, Arnobius, and Lactantius, he was by profession a lawyer, and at the time when he wrote the *Octavius* (about 175) had settled and begun to practise in Rome. The *Octavius* is a dialogue in the manner of Cicero, from a study of whose style Minucius had learned to write clear and polished Latin. The characters are three lawyers—Cæcilius Natalis, Octavius, and the writer. It is the beginning of the autumn vacation, and Minucius is walking with his friends on the shore at Ostia, enjoying the air and the sand and the sea, and watching the children play 'ducks and drakes.' As they walk, Cæcilius notices an image of the Egyptian god Serapis, and salutes it by kissing his hand. The Christian Octavius demurs at once: 'How is it,' he asks Minucius, 'that an intimate friend of yours can bring himself to be so superstitious.' Cæcilius broods over the question for a time in silence, but at length takes up the

implied challenge: the friends settle themselves on one of the long groynes with which the sea-baths are protected, Minucius sits as umpire between the other two, and the discussion begins. Cæcilius speaks first, and delivers a vivacious attack on Christianity. First he takes Epicurean ground: how should men so uneducated as the Christians be able to resolve the hardest question of philosophy; what ground can they have for their assurance about God; where is He to be seen in the fortuitous coalescence of atoms which we call the world, or in indiscriminate catastrophes which put an end to good and bad alike, and make the belief in a moral Ruler impossible. If there must be a religion, men should respect tradition and the established worship. History shows (here a new position is taken up) that the old gods have always aided their worshippers and punished the irreligious; it is therefore mere audacity for a secret faction to rebel against them, especially for such men as the Christians, whose bond of union is the crime of human sacrifice, who shun the light of day, who are as silent in public as they are loquacious among themselves. Their meetings are the occasion of vile immorality: they worship the head of an animal[1]: their leader was a felon crucified: at their initiation a child is killed and eaten. They are worse than the Jews, for the Jews had at least a God, a temple, and a ritual of sacrifices; while the Christians have only the figment of an omnipresent spirit. Their crowning absurdity is a belief in the resurrection of the body, which they think to facilitate by using burial rather than cremation. Finally, they are wretched in spite of their God, persecuted, unsociable, enemies to pleasure: they make the worst of this world and are deluded as to the next.

The attack is violent, inconsistent, unfair; but it doubtless represents the type of opinion which Minucius found current among his Pagan contemporaries. Octavius' reply is threefold. The first part is a protest

[1] This charge has been explained by the discovery at Rome of a rough caricature of the Crucifix, in which the figure has the head of an ass: underneath is written, 'Alexamenos worships his God.'

against the Epicurean agnosticism of Cæcilius. Appeal is made to the evidences of order in the world and to the common conscience of mankind, the 'natural Christianity' of unperverted reason. It is useless, Octavius says, to say that the illiterate have no right to think about God, for they are men, and all men have a capacity for the knowledge of God; and that of a God greater than their own thoughts—infinite, sole, unnameable. In the second place, it is absurd for an agnostic to be at the same time a vindicator of the old religion, of its Pantheon crowded with deified men and apotheoses of natural forces, of the fetishism which demands worship for statues, of the culpable ignorance which subjects human lives to the fear of evil spirits. Finally—and this is the genuinely apologetic part of the dialogue—the true facts of the Christian life are convincing in disproof of Cæcilius' aspersions. We are not a close corporation of criminals, but a growing body of chaste and sober men. We have no image of God, for we are made in His image; we believe that He is not far off, and do not need images to remind us of Him. As for immortality and the resurrection, a student of Plato and Pythagoras will not find them absurd. God Who made us can remake. Burial is indeed our custom, but it is only a custom, not a principle. As for the specific moral charges, we must be judged by our character; you will find no Christian guilty of crime, except the crime of being a Christian. Our poverty is no shame; our sufferings are no penalty, but a discipline. No one would endure what we endure without a worthy reason; no one could endure it unless God were with him. As for our abstinence, we stand aloof, not from the world, but from the evil in the world; as for our ignorance, it is our life that is great, not our words; it is our boast that we have found what all the philosophers have sought in vain.

CHAPTER VII

CHURCH AND STATE FROM HADRIAN TO COMMODUS

From considering specimens of Christian thought on its defence, we now go on to trace the history of that political policy of repression which the apologists strove in vain to mitigate. We have seen that the first seventy years of the Church's life brought about a bitter hostility between Christians and the empire. Merely to be a Christian became a crime punishable with death; persons suspected were liable to be hunted down and brought before the magistrates: no one was safe against the covetous curiosity of the informer. The causes which led to this state of war persisted throughout the second century. On the one side was the determination of the Church to keep herself pure from the taint of idolatry, and especially of the imperial worship; on the other, the official consciousness that the unity of the empire had no more necessary safeguard than the unity of its official religion, and the popular animosity to a society which abjured all the popular standards of right and wrong. But the actual conflict varied greatly in method and intensity: neither the official nor the popular hostility to the Church maintained itself at one level. An epoch, we saw, was marked by the policy of Trajan, who by forbidding organised search for Christians, and expressing strong disapproval of anonymous information, made the conditions of prosecution more difficult, and so procured for the Church a certain degree of unmolested peace.

Reign of Hadrian, A.D. 117-138.—Trajan died in 117, and was succeeded by his cousin Hadrian, a man whose eager interests, wide but never deep, contrasted strongly with the firm and wise temperament of the true statesman whom he succeeded. Hadrian viewed all religions from

without, with a strange mixture of curiosity and contempt: a restless traveller, he became acquainted with many creeds, but found rest in none. At Rome he combined the necessary conservatism of the official with the eclecticism of the unattached philosopher, inclining to the tenets of that Stoic Epictetus whom his predecessor, Domitian, had banished; at Athens he was initiated into the mysteries of Eleusis, solemn with the presage of immortality, and reached the higher grades of esoteric knowledge. From Alexandria he wrote to a friend, Servianus, a few contemptuous and cynical lines on the chaos of religions with which that bewildering city was distracted. 'Here the worshippers of Serapis are Christians, and those who call themselves bishops of Christ are devotees of Serapis; the ruler of a Jewish synagogue, the Samaritan, the Christian presbyter, is sure to be an astrologer or a soothsayer or a trainer. If the Jews' patriarch himself comes to Egypt, he is compelled to adore now Serapis and now Christ. Money is their real god: that is a religion to which Christian, Jew, and every kind of Gentile does adhere.' 'A meddler with the unsearchable,' 'the imperial sophist,' were the names with which Julian, two centuries later, described his predecessor's temper. Under such an emperor, it was natural that no searching ordinance could be executed against the Church. There was persecution, and the names at least of many martyrs (among them the Roman bishop **Telesphorus, about 117-127**) are preserved; but it must have been due to sporadic and local outbreaks of popular feeling. The apologies of Quadratus and Aristides were both presented to Hadrian, and apologies were impossible in times of unbroken peace; indeed, Quadratus begins by complaining that 'certain wicked men have been trying to molest our people.' These words must be taken as evidence of measures hostile to the Church at Athens; and from Asia we know that official application was made by a provincial governor, Serenus Granianus (about 124), for the imperial advice and policy in a question of persecution.

Rescript to Minucius Fundanus.—Hadrian's answer, sent to Serenus' successor, Minucius Fundanus, is still extant.

It is written to protect the innocent from disturbance, and to put difficulties in the way of dishonest informers. If the provincials care to come into court with a definite charge against Christians, and to prove that they have broken a law, well and good; but mere demonstrations and outcries are to be disregarded, and information given for private ends must be discouraged by punishing the informer. This appeal and decision appear, then, to have arisen out of a refusal on the part of Serenus to comply with popular clamours, in which his conduct is approved by the emperor and enjoined on his successor as an example. In spite of the ruling that some definite crime must be proved in the case of Christians (as though Christianity were not a crime in itself), it is not probable that Hadrian meant to reverse the policy of Trajan: he only makes it clear that the *onus probandi* lies on the accuser, who must bring tangible proofs that the *acts* of the accused are those of a Christian. But the language of the rescript is doubtless deliberately vague, and must have left considerable latitude to individual governors.

Reign of Antoninus Pius, A.D. 138-161.—The procedure initiated by Hadrian seems to have been continued. The 'serene and clement' disposition of the emperor was as good a safeguard as the restless scepticism of his father. 'Almost alone of all emperors,' says one of his biographers, 'he lived without bloodshed either of citizens or of enemies.' No official declaration of Antoninus Pius' policy is extant; but a 'Rescript to the Confederation of Asia,' written and ascribed to him by a Christian of the next generation, shows by its exaggerated tolerance the gratitude with which his reign was remembered. Nevertheless, more names of martyrs assigned to this period are preserved than is the case in any earlier reign: a fact which must be accounted for partly by the growing copiousness of the Christian records, and partly by the increased bitterness of popular feeling. Anti-Christian agitation was generally due to some public calamity, for which the Pagan populations were glad to hold the Church responsible. As Tertullian said fifty years later: 'If the Tiber rises or the Nile refuses to rise, if ever there is a famine or a plague, the cry at once is heard, "The Christians to

the lions."' And the reign of Antoninus Pius was full of calamities, which fell most heavily on Asia: there were famines, floods, and destructive fires at Rome, Narbonne, Antioch, Carthage; earthquakes wrecked the towns of Bithynia and the Hellespont, destroyed Mitylene, and inflicted great loss on Smyrna. The emperor sought to prevent the provincials from rising to avenge these disasters on the Christians: letters were sent to Larissa, Thessalonica, Athens, and the Greek towns of Asia, prohibiting violent attacks upon the Church. It is perhaps possible to connect the letter to Athens with the martyrdom of the bishop Publius, which is assigned to this reign; while the death of Ptolemæus and Lucius at Rome, which called forth Justin's First Apology (p. 73), reminds us that the old law remained in force, and that nothing could protect Christians from prosecution so long as the procedure was legal and orderly.

Polycarp: his life.—But the greatest martyr of this reign, Polycarp of Smyrna, was not a victim to orderly procedure. He was born about the year A.D. 70, 'was taught by Apostles and lived in familiar intercourse with many that had seen Christ,' and was appointed Bishop of Smyrna, we are told, 'by Apostles,' that is, in all probability, by S. John. It was when Polycarp was between forty and fifty that Ignatius passed through Asia on his way to die at Rome (about 110). Ignatius sent a letter back to him from Troas: a letter of affectionate encouragement, urging Polycarp to 'stand fast as an anvil that is smitten,' and asking him to continue his care for the orphan church of Antioch, and to see that representatives are sent from Smyrna and other cities to look after its welfare. This journey of Ignatius was also the occasion of the only writing of Polycarp which has been preserved. At Philippi, Ignatius charged the church to send news of him to Antioch. Their messenger went as far as Smyrna, and there handed over his letter to a messenger of Polycarp's; Polycarp then sent to Philippi an answer to the letter, in which they had asked for this arrangement to be made, and also the letters which Ignatius had written to Asiatic churches from Smyrna and Troas.

Polycarp's brief letter has a double interest, as the sole writing of Polycarp and the last monument of the Philippian church; it is a 'pastoral epistle,' full of the language of the New Testament: he rejoices in the firmly rooted and fruitful faith of the Philippian church, and in their devotion to the martyrs; excuses himself for venturing to write to them, which only their request would have led him to do, since such as he 'cannot attain to the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul,' their teacher by word and epistle. He sends exhortations (especially to the widows, deacons, and presbyters), deplores the fall of a presbyter and his wife into avarice, warns the church against the prevailing types of error, and urges them to follow the high example of such as Ignatius, Zosimus, Rufus, the saints of their own church, S. Paul and the other holy Apostles. Of the rest of Polycarp's life very little is known; the only fact of real importance is that late in life (about A.D. 154) he visited Rome. There he was able, in virtue of his venerable age and the testimony which he could bear to the apostolic teaching, to make a great impression on the Roman Gnostics. It is said that in Rome he met Marcion, the founder of the first separatist Church; and that when Marcion challenged him, 'Dost thou recognise us,' he answered sternly, 'I recognise the firstborn of Satan.' A story is told of his relations with the Roman bishop Anicetus which stands in pleasing contrast with the hasty imperiousness of the next pope, Victor. Polycarp had a discussion with Anicetus as to the time and manner of keeping Easter: each maintained the correctness of his own view, the one appealing to S. John and the Churches of Asia at large, the other to the unbroken custom of his own Church. They finally agreed to differ amicably, and Anicetus with true courtesy allowed Polycarp to take his place and celebrate the Eucharist in his presence.

Martyrdom of Polycarp.—A few years afterwards, on the 23rd of February 156, Polycarp suffered death for the faith. The circumstances of his martyrdom are known from a letter written soon afterwards by the Smyrnæan Church to that of a Phrygian town, Philomelium. Smyrna,

which had always been conspicuous for its zealous maintenance of the imperial religion, was in February 156 holding the great annual festival of the confederation of Asia (*commune Asiæ*). This was a political and religious body, representative of the chief Asiatic cities, and charged on the political side with the duty of keeping the provincials in touch with the emperor, and on the religious side with maintaining, through its president or Asiarch, the cult of the emperors. The Asiarch Philip provided games of exceptional splendour: the religious imperialism which these festivals were meant to foster was running high, and the sect which ventured to hold aloof from the universal demonstrations was not unnaturally attacked. Eleven Christians had been recently arrested in Philadelphia: they were brought to Smyrna, tried, and sentenced to be thrown to wild beasts; and the Augustan games were enhanced by the spectacle which their sufferings afforded. The crowd in the stadium were excited to a fury of murderous appetite, and cried, 'Away with the atheists! hunt for Polycarp!' The bishop had retired to a farm in the country. A boy betrayed his hiding-place under torture: he refused to escape, but asked to have an hour's respite for prayer; then, after 'remembering in his prayer all who at any time had come in his way, small and great, high and low, and all the universal Church throughout the world,' he was taken into the city. The next morning he was brought into the stadium. It was a 'high Sabbath,' and many Jews were among the spectators, and joined in the furious uproar which greeted the entry of the bishop. The officials renewed the attempts which they had made on the previous night to make the old man recant and offer incense to the emperor. 'Swear by the genius of Cæsar,' said the proconsul, and say, 'Away with the atheists.' Polycarp only looked round upon the vast heathen crowd, and looking up to heaven said, 'Away with the atheists.' The meaning of his prayer was hidden from the magistrate, who still offered terms. 'Swear, and I will release you: blaspheme Christ.' Polycarp gave the memorable answer, 'Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong: how can I blaspheme my

King, Who saved me?' His refusal was announced to the crowd, who clamoured, Jews and Gentiles alike, that a lion should be let loose upon him; but the games were over, and the Asiarch would not have them renewed. The populace then took the law into their own hands, gathered a pile of wood from the neighbouring shops and baths, and seizing Polycarp, bound him unresisting to the stake. The improvised pyre blazed up in a great arch of flame, scarcely touching the aged martyr, when a kindly sword-thrust soon released him from torture. At the urgent request of the Jews, to whom the Smyrnæan letter ascribes fanatic zeal against the Church, the body was left to be burned; the ashes, 'more precious than jewels,' were gathered up by Christian hands and laid in 'a fitting place of rest.' With this heroic martyrdom the persecution of Antoninus Pius appears to have come to an end.

Reign of Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher-king, A.D. 161-180.—Under the next emperor, Marcus Aurelius, the warfare of the Church assumed a different aspect. Marcus was indeed, in matters of principle, a diligent imitator of his father's character. 'Act always,' he wrote, for his own guidance, 'as a pupil of Antoninus should: remember his thoroughness in obeying the law of reason; his equable, pure, serene, and gentle mind, his penetrating insight into character, his scorn of ostentation. He was never exacting or suspicious: content with great plainness in food, in furniture, in service, he was always industrious, patient, and perfect in self-control.' There was much in Marcus Aurelius that faithfully reproduced the beauties of his father's character; austere in life, diligent in consideration for others, strict and exact in official duty, he devoted the whole of his leisure to the study of great subjects, to the problems of life and duty, the examination of self, the discipline of emotion, and the concentration of effort on union with God. Much of his time was spent on the dreary plains of Bohemia and Hungary, in campaigns against the barbarous invaders who, at that time, were constantly pushing forward across the north-eastern frontiers; it was then that he wrote the book by which we know him, 'the

most human book ever written,' as Renan called it. The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius reveal the philosopher-king as a liberal Stoic: liberal in his appreciation of many types of thought, but most deeply rooted in the belief that the world is indwelt by reason, and that man's business is to live a life of conformity to Nature, that is, to the reason which governs the system of which he is a member. This belief is the essence of Stoicism, and it was from the writings of the Stoic Epictetus that Marcus Aurelius drew much of his inspiration in developing it into a religion of duty.

Marcus' motives for persecution.—Why, with such a religion, did the emperor become a persecutor of the body whose ideal was so closely allied to his own? A partial answer would be that Marcus Aurelius was strictly faithful to his teachers, who had always looked down on the 'Galileans'; devotees of Nature, they had an intense dislike for the supernaturalism of Christian teaching. But his opposition to the Church was not that of a teacher to false doctrine: he scarcely mentions the Christians in his *Meditations*. Once, when speaking of the duty of keeping oneself prepared for death, he alludes with scorn to the triumph with which the martyrs went to meet it: one should be ready, as the result of deliberate judgment, and die with dignity, not 'for mere obstinacy like the Christians,' nor with a 'melodramatic' exit. Marcus makes no allusion to the Christian creed. To explain the persecutions, then, we must look at his practical policy. Here again, however, the same difficulty meets us. The whole tendency of legislation in this reign is towards humanity and equal justice. The emperor's private fortune as well as the public money was devoted to education and to well-considered charity; the condition of slaves, to whom the Stoicism of Roman lawyers had already begun to allow a share in the common rights of man, was now improved, as was also that of wards and minors; the rigours of criminal law were diminished, and even the degrading horrors of the gladiatorial shows would have been reformed away, had not public opinion risen against that curtailment of popular privilege. What counteracting cause prevented

the application of these liberal principles to the Christian Church? First, the existing law on this subject was the result of deliberate action by emperors whom Marcus Aurelius respected: to reverse it would have been difficult for one who, like him, was scrupulously conservative in every matter which a Roman could hold important. And further, in respect of religious observances, Marcus Aurelius was especially tenacious of the old tradition, and while ready to go beyond them in sanctioning new forms of worship, he was a natural enemy to the only faith which could not tolerate the toleration of Roman polytheism. Thus it was that the ruler who surrounded himself with thinkers quite detached from the accepted forms of Paganism, who was himself a *flamen* of the Salii, and permitted himself to take part in the puerilities invented by the impostor Alexander, was also responsible for the severest period of suffering through which the Church had yet been made to pass. That the author of the *Meditations* was also the sternest of persecutors is almost a paradox; and if by 'persecution' were meant the forcible suppression of opinions, it would prove him tainted with a hateful insincerity. But Marcus Aurelius, who taught that compulsion made men 'irrational slaves and hypocrites,' did not make war on opinions: he oppressed a society which seemed to him, as to his predecessors, to menace the unity and the moral well-being of the Roman empire.

Persecutions in Rome, Asia, and Gaul.

(1) In **Rome** the apologist Justin Martyr, denounced, as he had expected (p. 72), by the philosopher Crescens (163), was brought before the city prefect, Junius Rusticus. The conflict between him and Crescens had been one of opinions: the crime with which he, and others with him, were charged, had nothing to do with opinions. The prefect called on him not to recant, but to perform the religious duty of a citizen, to offer incense. He and his companions refused, and were beheaded.

(2) In **Asia Minor**, where the progress and the sufferings of the Church had always been considerable, 'new edicts' were promulgated, probably about the year 176, in pursuance of which 'the people who

fear God were persecuted all over Asia. Shameless informers, men greedy for gain, took occasion from these ordinances to practise open brigandage, despoiling, night and day, men guilty of no crime.' These sentences are quoted by the historian Eusebius from an apology presented to Marcus Aurelius by **Melito**, bishop of Sardis (175). Melito did not believe, or affected not to believe, that the emperor was responsible for what was happening. He appealed for a fair examination, protesting that measures were being taken which would not be used against a savage enemy in war. His arguments (only a few fragments survive) were singularly bold: he presented the Christian religion as coeval with the empire, the contemporary at least of the highest flood-tide of Roman prosperity; and called on the emperor to abstain from a ferocity of which only a Nero and a Domitian were capable. This appeal is the only surviving trace of the Asiatic persecution. But it is known that **Apollinaris**, bishop of Hierapolis, and **Miltiades** made similar efforts. The former relied on an episode which was believed, thirty years afterwards, to have strongly affected the emperor in favour of the Church. In a campaign against the Quadi in 164, Marcus Aurelius and the twelfth legion were cut off from their water-supply, and after suffering agonies of thirst were suddenly relieved by a violent storm of thunder and rain. The official records saw in this an answer to the intercession of the emperor, and coins bearing an image of Jupiter Pluvius were struck in honour of the event. Others claimed as their deliverer one Arnuphis, an Egyptian magician who was among the camp-followers. The Christian story referred the miracle to the prayers of Christian soldiers in the legion. This was the version of the affair to which Apollinaris appealed. That the appeal was, in fact, useless is shown by the undiminished severity of the persecution.

(3) In **Gaul** the hand of the enemy fell with cruel force on the churches of **Lugdunum** (Lyon) and **Vienna**, the former situated at the junction of the Rhone and the Saône, the latter on the left bank of the Rhone, a few miles lower down. The south of Gaul had long

been closely linked with the trading cities of the Asiatic sea-board, and early in the second century the current of trade and immigration from Smyrna had carried Christianity to the commercial cities of the Rhone valley. In the seventeenth year of Marcus Aurelius (177) a wave of anti-Christian agitation swept over the district. The old calumnies were propagated and believed. Every misfortune was attributed to the hated class; men shut their doors against the Christians, drove them out of the public baths, forbade them to buy or sell in the markets, stoned and hooted them in the streets. At Lugdunum the public disorder was so great, that in order to allay it a number of the faithful were arrested, in spite of the protests of one Vettius Epagathus, a Christian of high rank. On the arrival of the imperial legate, who had been in another part of the province, the accused were examined by torture. The number of sufferers was daily increased: the inquisition spread to Vienna, and soon the majority of Christians in both towns were in prison. Among them the aged Pothinus, bishop of Lugdunum; Sanctus, a deacon of Vienna; Maturus, 'a neophyte, but a noble warrior'; Attalus, a native of Pergamos; Blandina, a young slave-girl; and Ponticus, a boy of fifteen, have the place of honour in the story which their churches sent to those of Asia and Phrygia. This noble letter, worthy to be ranked with that which the Smyrnæans had written twenty years before, tells how in two cases the terrors of torture gained their end; some ten Christians proved too weak to bear them, and renounced the faith; while certain heathen slaves were forced to confess that their Christian masters were guilty of the foul charges popularly brought against them.

The result was a dreadful increase of popular fury and official cruelty. But the confessors, confined in filthy dungeons and tortured with every refinement of brutality, made their prison a colony of Churchmen. They so far maintained their unity with the Church at large as to intervene by letters as peacemakers in the controversies of the time; and we are told of one striking instance of the charity which the sharing of a common burden can teach.

One Alcibiades had been used to live a life of rigorous abstinence, and attempted at first to adhere in prison to his ordinary rule; but when he found out what a reflection his austerities seemed to cast on his companions, he allowed himself to eat without scruple, giving God thanks. Imprisonment and torture were soon fatal to the old bishop Pothinus. 'Who is the Christian God?' he was asked; and for the answer, 'Thou shalt learn if thou art worthy,' he was so cruelly handled that in two days he died. After a while the legate gave a special spectacle in the amphitheatre: confessors and apostates alike were led in, the former triumphant, the latter hopeless. Sanctus and Maturus were put to death after a day of torments, Attalus paraded with a placard, 'Hic est Attalus Christianus,' Blandina offered to wild beasts, who refused to touch her.

Meanwhile a request had been sent to Rome for the emperor's advice. The response was that release should be offered as the reward of recantation, and that the obstinate should be put to death. The 1st of August offered a fit occasion for a great display. On that day the *Concilium Galliarum* celebrated with magnificent ceremonies the anniversary of the consecration of the local altar of Rome and Augustus. Before an enormous concourse the victims were brought in; some few it appears were reprieved; of the rest, those who were Roman citizens were beheaded, the rest were scourged, seated on a red-hot chair, tossed by bulls, or mangled by wild animals. The girl Blandina, forced to witness the sufferings of the rest, was kept with the young Ponticus to the last; the boy was first despatched, and then Blandina, 'rejoicing and triumphing in her departure, went to join her fellows.' The conflict which ended with her death was in many ways unique. The number of actual martyrs was large, the denials were comparatively few, and the struggle was so long continued that many of the lapsed had time to be shamed into recovery of their courage; while the temper of the confessors, constant beyond belief, was wholly free from that arrogance which cast such a cloud on some of the most heroic martyrdoms of the succeeding century.

Reign of Commodus, A.D. 180-192.—In 180 Marcus Aurelius died. The reign of his son Commodus offers at all points a strong contrast to that of Marcus. Commodus was one of the worst of emperors, a man of debauched habits, an irrational despot. His father's leisure had given the *Meditations* to the world: that of the son was passed in fighting as a gladiator in the arena. And yet the paradox of destiny which made Marcus Aurelius a persecutor made Commodus a benefactor of the Church. There were indeed martyrdoms in his reign: the proto-martyrs of Africa suffered at Madaura, in Numidia, in 180, and on the 16th of August in the same year twelve Christians were executed at Scillium in the same district. These acts of persecution may, of course, be regarded as due to the policy of Marcus; but we hear of similar events in Asia about 184, and about the same time a Roman senator called Apollonius, after a fruitless defence before the senate, was beheaded. Yet the informer in this case is said to have perished also; and it is certain that from this time onwards the position of the Church began to improve. More than one Christian held office in the imperial household, and Marcia, the emperor's mistress, interested herself on behalf of the Church. A slave Callistus, who afterwards became bishop of Rome, was among those who profited by this strange but powerful support. About the year 190, Marcia is said to have summoned the pope Victor to her presence and obtained from him the names of those confessors who had been condemned to work in the Sardinian mines. A general amnesty was announced, and Callistus, who had been sentenced a year or two before, was among those who were liberated.

There can be no doubt that the historian Eusebius is right in treating the reign of Commodus as the beginning of a new epoch for the Church. Persecution was indeed not to end till more than a century later, but it ceased now to be the normal relation between Church and Empire. In the succeeding reigns we find no longer a continuous state of war, but a series of definite outbreaks, begun and terminated by overt acts of the imperial power, and separated from each other by long intervals of unbroken peace.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCHES OF ROME AND ALEXANDRIA

1. The Church of Rome.—From the beginning of Christianity down to the division of the empire by Diocletian (A.D. 284), Rome was the capital of the civilised world. This political fact was the chief cause of the importance which the Roman Church attained in the ante-Nicene period. In the fourth and fifth centuries, when the tide of barbarian invasion was breaking up the western empire, a series of powerful popes succeeded in making good a claim to supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction; among these were Leo the Great (440-461) and Gregory the Great (590-604), who were the creators of the modern Papacy. But this development falls outside our period. The ante-Nicene bishops of Rome did in some cases claim an authority proportionate to the dignity of the imperial city, but those claims were only faint premonitions of the later papalism.

The introduction of Christianity into Rome was not the work of any of the Apostles: S. Paul made it a rule not to build on another man's foundation (Rom. xv. 20), and when he wrote to the Romans in A.D. 56, there already existed a Christian community consisting largely of Gentiles, with a minority of Jewish members. How this society came into existence it is hard to say; but from the number of men and women in Rome whom S. Paul salutes as old friends, it is most natural to infer that converts from the Pauline churches of Greece and Asia had at an early date been brought to Rome by the tide of commerce.[1] By the year A.D. 61 the Church had

[1] See *The Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Sanday and Headlam, pp. xxv-xxviii.

found its way into high places (Phil. iv. 22), and when the Neronian persecution broke out in 64, it numbered, according to Tacitus, an 'immense multitude' of members.

Epistle of Clement, A.D. 96.—The sufferings of the Roman church under Nero and Domitian have been mentioned elsewhere (pp. 37 ff., 41 ff.). At the end of Domitian's reign, the Roman bishop **Clement** wrote in the name of the Church to the Christians of Corinth, where certain presbyters had been unreasonably deposed from office. Clement reminds the Corinthians that the Apostles had everywhere appointed their 'first-fruits' to be bishops and deacons, and had afterwards 'provided a continuance, that if these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministration'; a ministerial commission so received cannot be disregarded without sin. The sedition in their church is due to party-spirit; and party-spirit makes Christian brotherhood impossible. This letter, with its unique testimony to primitive Church order, had a wide circulation in the early centuries: Dionysius of Corinth, writing to Soter of Rome about A.D. 166, speaks of its being read in his church at Sunday services; and in the fourth century, though it was not reckoned a canonical book, this public use of it was still quite common. This intervention of the Roman church in the affairs of Corinth did not imply any claim to jurisdiction; it exemplified rather the sense of unity and common interests in the Church which made the difficulties of one society a matter of concern to all; and it is closely parallel to the series of 'catholic letters' in which Dionysius of Corinth, sixty years afterwards, gave advice to the churches of Athens, Lacedæmon, and the Cretan cities.

That the Roman church was highly respected by distant communities is shown by the language of **Ignatius**, who wrote from Smyrna, about A.D. 110 (p. 43), 'to the Church that has the presidency in the country of the region of the Romans, a Church worthy of God . . . which has the presidency of love, walking in the law of Christ.' Ignatius also suggests that some of the Roman Christians had enough secular influence to prevent the execution of his sentence: 'I dread your very love, lest it do me an

injury, for it is easy for you to do what ye will'; and he asks them not to do him this 'unseasonable kindness.'

The Shepherd of Hermas.—About A.D. 140, in the episcopate of Pius, Hermas the bishop's brother wrote a book called the *Shepherd*, which contains vivid pictures of the ideal and the real Church. In the five visions with which the book begins, the Church appears to him as an aged woman, enthroned on a chair covered with white wool; she is venerable, because 'she was created first of all things, and for her sake the world was made.' She appears in order to quicken Hermas' conscience; and she shows him a tower which six angels are building: myriads of men supply them with stones, some of which are squared and fit for use, while others are round or rough or cracked, and these the angels cast away; some again are set in the tower, but soon fall away.

The five visions are followed by twelve commandments: these are given to Hermas by 'a man of glorious aspect, dressed like a shepherd'; they enjoin upon him faith, truthfulness, purity, patience, prayerfulness, the fear of God, and the discerning of true prophecy. The Shepherd, who is the 'angel of repentance,' then interprets to Hermas a series of ten symbolic visions or parables, which all have the same motive as the first vision; the three characters of the saint, the conventional Christian and the wilful sinner are contrasted in varied and graphic representations. The whole book is a sermon for the times; its visions are intended to portray the actual state of the Roman Church in the light of God's judgment, and the keynote of the whole is Repentance. If the Church has many worthy members, and many more who are faithful in part, yet in various ways the responsibilities of the baptized are being forgotten: the pleasures of the world and the flesh are lowering men's ideals, love of money is teaching men disrespect for the poor, the character of 'Facing-both-ways' is becoming common; ambition, disobedience, and even dishonesty are charged against the presbyters and deacons; and under the stress of persecution, Christians are guilty of various degrees of disloyalty. Although Hermas probably wrote when Gnostic teachers were active in Rome, he was so con-

cerned with the moral situation that this intellectual danger called from him only a passing allusion to 'hypocrites and sowers of strange doctrines.' His interest was disciplinary; and he enforced three principles of discipline: (1) sins committed after baptism may be purged by repentance; (2) no sin is too bad for absolution, although some sins make repentance very difficult; (3) restoration after baptism can only be granted once. Hermas does not lay these rules down as laws of the Church, nor does he say that a second relapse must exclude a man from all hope; but he is maintaining a high ideal, and will not encourage slackness by preaching an easy Gospel.

Christian travellers in Rome.—The Epistle to Diognetus (a beautiful fragment of an anonymous apology) says, that to the Christians 'every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland a foreign country.' Perhaps this sense of homeless cosmopolitanism was in part the cause of the remarkable amount of travelling which early Church history records. There is scarcely one of the prominent men of the second and third centuries who does not help to illustrate the mobility of men and ideas. Some of these, like Melito of Sardis, who moved towards Mesopotamia and visited the holy places of Palestine, confined themselves to the East; but most of them were found at some time in Rome, the centre of the world's traffic. By the middle of the second century Cerdon Marcion and Valentinus had brought their strange doctrines there, and Justin, moving from Ephesus, had opposed them. Polycarp came to Rome as a very old man about 150, Hegesippus came from Palestine in the same period, and Avircius Marcellus, bishop of Hieropolis in Phrygia, wrote for himself an epitaph in which his journey to Italy is mentioned: after going as far eastward as Nisibis in Mesopotamia, he went west, 'to see the great king and the queen with her golden robe and sandals,' and there he saw the people that has the bright seal (*i.e.* baptism).

The appeal to apostolic Churches.—This current of communication between distant Churches was used in a special way on behalf of the apostolic traditions against heresy. Thus Hegesippus assured himself by his travels that the

standard of teaching was everywhere faithful to the 'Law, the Prophets, and the Lord.' Reference was especially made to those Churches which had been founded by Apostles. Tertullian in A.D. 197 urged the agreement of all these Churches as a guarantee of their loyalty to primitive doctrine: Corinth and Philippi were accessible to Greeks, Ephesus to Asiatics, 'and if you are near Italy you have Rome, whence also we of Carthage have an authority near at hand.' Exactly the same appeal had been made by Irenæus twenty years before against Gnosticism: the security given by the succession of bishops going back to the Apostles could be illustrated, he said, from many Churches; but it was easier to choose one great example, and therefore he chose the Roman Church—'for to this Church, on account of its stronger pre-eminence, it is necessary that every Church should resort, that is, the faithful from all parts.' Irenæus then enumerates the twelve bishops from Linus, whom the Apostles appointed, to his own contemporary Eleutherus (A.D. 177-192), as witnesses to the continuity of the true tradition at Rome. It is noteworthy that Irenæus refers the foundation of Roman Christianity to S. Peter and S. Paul, that he reckons the succession of bishops from the Apostles and not from S. Peter alone, and that he numbers them in such a way as to show plainly that he did not reckon S. Peter as the first Roman bishop.

Victor and the Paschal controversy.—Irenæus also appears in another incident which throws some light on the kind and limits of Roman influence at the end of the second century. When Polycarp visited Rome about A.D. 150, the difference between the Asiatic and the Western modes of fixing and keeping Easter did not prevent Anicetus from showing him the greatest courtesy (p. 83). But the Roman bishop **Victor** (A.D. 192-199) took a very different line. It is probable that under Soter, Victor's immediate predecessor, the good relations existing between the Asiatics resident in Rome and the Roman church had been disturbed, and the custom of 'sending the Eucharist' to them had been discontinued. Victor determined to end the dispute, and wrote to the bishops of Asia requesting them to hold

synods to this end. Similar synods in Rome and other centres outside Asia Minor decided that Easter must be kept on a Sunday. Victor went on to desire the Asiatics to reach the same decision, and on their refusal declared them cut off from communion. This assumption and hasty use of authority called forth protests from many bishops, and Irenæus, who was among the remonstrants, wrote not to Victor only, but to many other bishops. Polycrates of Ephesus, the direct object of Victor's attack, refused wholly to be intimidated, and reminded Victor that Rome was not the only Church which possessed great apostolic traditions.

Hippolytus and Callistus.—Victor was the first Roman bishop to bear a Latin name. The Christian literature of Rome down to Hippolytus was all in Greek, and the works of Hippolytus were entirely written in that language. Hippolytus' activity extended over the reign of four bishops—Zephyrinus (199-217), Callistus (217-222), Urbanus (222-230), and Pontianus (230-235). A statue erected to his memory not long after his death was unearthed at Rome in 1551, and on the chair in which the figure is seated appears a long list of his works; the fact that little of his writings survives except his *Refutation of all Heresies* and his *Commentary on Daniel*, is due to the peculiar part which he took in the controversies of his time. Two questions, one of doctrine and one of discipline, were then disturbing the Roman church. Praxeas, an Asiatic, and Noetus were then popularising in Rome a type of theology which dwelt strongly on the unique sovereignty (*monarchia*) of God, and asserted that the Son and the Holy Spirit were different modes or aspects under which God was at different epochs manifested. These modalist Monarchians, as they were called, would not accept a doctrine of the Trinity in which the Three Persons were regarded as eternally distinct, and they were specially opposed to the teaching which spoke of the Son as 'subordinate' to the Father. To their type of Monarchian doctrine the popes Zephyrinus and Callistus were inclined: they appear to have been administrators rather than thinkers, and the best thought of the time, as repre-

sented in the West by Hippolytus and Tertullian, was against them.

In discipline, Hippolytus strongly opposed the policy of Callistus. The question which Hermas had foreshadowed had now become serious: *Could absolution be rightly granted for any sin, however grave? and under what conditions might apostates or excommunicate persons be restored to communion?* The Roman church had rejected the rigid Montanist answer to these questions, and Hippolytus charged Callistus with improper laxity in dealing with them. His attack on the bishop was vehemently personal, and attributed to him some decisions which are hardly credible; but it appears that Callistus had (1) begun to grant absolution for sins of schism and sensuality on rather easy terms, (2) refused to allow the deposition of bishops for scandalous conduct, (3) permitted the clergy to marry, and allowed persons twice or thrice married to keep their place among the clergy. LikeTertullian, Hippolytus thought this slackness intolerable, and seceded from the Church. He had been bishop of Portus at the mouth of the Tiber; after his secession, it is said that he became an 'anti-pope' in Rome, but this is highly uncertain; possibly the tradition arose from the number of Roman Churchmen who shared his antagonism to Callistus. He appears to have returned to the Church after Callistus' death, and in A.D. 235 he was banished with the bishop Pontianus to Sardinia, 'an unhealthy island,' where he died. His body was brought back to Rome with that of Pontianus, and both confessors were thenceforward commemorated on the 13th of August, the day of their 'deposition' in the catacombs.

Cornelius and Novatian.—The problem of discipline runs through nearly the whole of our period: in times of persecution it became acute, and in times of peace the absence of danger so relaxed the moral fibre of Churchmen as to provide new matter for controversy. The 'Long Peace,' which gave the Church rest from persecution for thirty years (220-250), was such a time of relaxation. The persecution of Decius began early in 250 and lasted till the spring of 251. The'Roman bishop Fabian was martyred in 250; it was impossible to elect his successor before June in

the following year. The most able thinker in Rome was then **Novatian**, whose book *De Trinitate* was the first Latin theological work produced by the Roman church. But Novatian was a man of the extreme Puritan type. There had been many cases of apostasy during the persecution, and Novatian with many others of the clergy advocated the irrevocable exclusion of the *lapsi* from communion. This party did not, however, command a majority at Rome, and **Cornelius**, a man of less unpractical views, was compelled to accept election as bishop. Novatian had hopes that the church of Carthage and its great bishop **Cyprian** would side with him against the party of laxity. The news of Cornelius' election reached Carthage at the same time as that of Novatian's protest against it. Cyprian sent to Rome to make sure of the facts, but by this time Novatian had persuaded three Italian bishops to consecrate him as anti-pope. Cyprian was keenly alive to the importance of discipline, but he was also a statesman; and as he recognised that the procedure of Cornelius' appointment had been perfectly legitimate, he procured the excommunication of Novatian by a Carthaginian council. About the same time — late in the summer of 251—sixty bishops assembled at Rome also cut Novatian off from their communion.

The Novatianists soon became a powerful sect; they came to hold that all deadly sin, and not merely apostasy, made restoration impossible, and called themselves Cathari, or the pure men, to mark themselves off from the churches which permitted sinners and saints—like wheat and tares—to exist together in the same field. They were very strong in Africa, Gaul, North Italy, and Asia Minor till the end of the fourth century; in the fifth, after having shared—as opponents of Arianism—the varying fortunes of the orthodox party, they began to be merged in the other Puritan sects.

A letter of Cornelius enables us to estimate the size of the Roman church in A.D. 250: there were 46 priests, 7 deacons, 7 subdeacons, 42 acolytes, 52 exorcists, 52 readers and doorkeepers, 1500 widows and orphans.

Stephanus and Cyprian.—The pontificate of **Stephanus** (254-257) supplies, in two difficult cases, evidence as to the

degree of authority which a strong-minded pope could claim at this time, and the spirit with which this claim was met by other bishops. In the Decian persecution, two Spanish bishops, Basilides and Martialis, had renounced the faith, the latter in an open and scandalous way. They were held to have forfeited their position, and their sees were filled up. They accordingly went to Rome, and persuaded Stephanus to intervene on their behalf. Sabinus and Felix, their successors, thereupon appealed to Cyprian and a council at Carthage. Cyprian did not hesitate to put aside the authority of Stephanus, although he excused the pope himself on the ground of the false statements by which he had been misled.

Dispute about re-baptism.—Cyprian adopted a rather hostile tone to Stephanus later in 254, when urging him to procure the removal of Marcianus of Arles, who had become a Novatianist; in the next year there was an open quarrel between Rome on the one side and Africa with the Asiatic churches on the other. Holding that a man who does not believe rightly about the Trinity could not baptize duly into the Name of the Trinity, the African and Asiatic churches had been accustomed to re-baptize all heretics who returned to their communion. At Rome, on the other hand, it had been usual to re-admit them by imposition of hands. In 255 a council of seventy-one bishops, under the presidency of Cyprian, formally adopted the principle of re-baptism. Cyprian communicated their decision to Stephanus, explaining that it was not meant to force the hand of other Churches. Stephanus in reply threatened the whole African Church with excommunication; and in spite of another conciliar decision from Carthage, he actually carried out his threat. This action was not isolated: in pursuance of the same policy, Stephanus had previously excommunicated the Churches of Cappadocia, Cilicia, Galatia, and the provinces near them for the same reason. Firmilian of Cæsarea in Cappadocia wrote a letter of sympathy to Cyprian, whom Stephanus had called a 'false Christ' and a 'worker of deceit.' Like Irenæus in the case of Victor, Firmilian appealed from Stephanus to the toleration of earlier ages; and his

apostrophe to the pope sums up the situation—'thou hast excommunicated thyself.' The Church was, in fact, not yet ripe for a papacy; and Stephanus' claim to be a 'bishop of bishops' could still be regarded as an assumption of tyranny and an invasion of episcopal rights. The baptismal controversy was in fact decided (for the west only), by the council of Arles in 314, in favour of the Roman view; but when the Africans submitted, they bowed to the necessity of union, and not to the force of a papal decision.

The Church of the capital was, however, moving towards a foremost position in this century; and on one occasion this pre-eminence was recognised by an emperor. Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, was deposed by a synod in 269 for heresy; but being a highly influential person, he ventured to disregard the sentence and retain the episcopal residence. A civil action resulted, which came in 172 before the emperor Aurelian. His decision was noteworthy: it held that the ecclesiastical buildings of Antioch belonged to the bishop whom the bishops of Rome and Italy should recognise.

2. **The Church of Alexandria.**—The origin of Christianity in Egypt is wholly unknown. Eusebius mentions a tradition that S. Mark preached there, but he makes it clear that he had no evidence to confirm it; and little reliance can be placed on his list of early Alexandrian bishops. Alexandria was the home of Gnosticism before A.D. 140, and its Christianity must therefore go back beyond that date; and as it had for several centuries been the home of a great Jewish colony, there is some ground for presuming that a Church was founded there at a very early date. At the beginning of the third century there were Christians far up the Nile, in the Thebaid; and a hundred years later that district was the home of Egyptian monasticism, the great ascetic movement from which the monasticism of the West took its rise; but in our period the Church of Alexandria alone has a real history.

Of the population of Alexandria a third part were Jews; the other two-thirds were a medley of races—Egyptian, Greek, and Græco-Egyptian. The religion of

the place was cosmopolitan: the cult of the old Egyptian deities and the religions of the Greek world went on side by side; but the intellectual life which made Alexandria the centre of the world's culture was purely Greek. The unique library of Ptolemy and the richly endowed Museum or university had created a great tradition of Alexandrian scholarship before the Christian era; and when the Church first appears there, the great period of Alexandrian philosophy was just beginning. The literature of the scholars was that of Greece; the philosophers took their name and inspiration from Plato.

The Catechetical School.—In a place where thought was so keen and restless, the instruction of converts to Christianity was of the first importance; the first fact recorded of the Alexandrian Church was the foundation of a school in which catechumens were taught the elements of the faith, and those who wished could have more advanced instruction. This *Catechetical School* became a kind of Christian university, a supplement and rival to the Museum, and a centre of resistance to the schools of the Gnostics. Its first head whose life is known was *Pantænus*, of whom we hear from his great pupil *Clement*, who succeeded him about the year 190. Clement travelled far as a young man, and came under the influence of six successive Christian teachers—one in Greece, two in South Italy, one in Assyria, one in Palestine, one in Egypt—and the last of these was Pantænus. Clement's master was also a traveller, and taught as a missionary in India. Perhaps Clement's work in the catechetical school began during Pantænus' absence in the East. It did not last long: in 202 the persecution of Septimius Severus broke up the school for a time, and Clement left Alexandria. A few years later he was in Cappadocia, as we learn from a letter of his friend and pupil Alexander, afterwards bishop of Jerusalem: he died before 216.

Clement's writings.—Clement was a man of great learning: the number of the works quoted in his books (over 500) attests the width of his reading. Three of his extant writings (the *Exhortation to the Greeks*, the *Tutor*, and the

Stromateis or miscellanies) form a continuous series, and so illustrate for us the progressive work of the catechetical school. The first is introductory and comparative: it contrasts the efforts of Greek philosophy with the revelation of the Divine Word in Christ, and was doubtless meant to show to converts the nature of the change they were making. In the second, the Tutor is Christ Himself, the true educator of men, who trains men up by love and sternness to the vision of God. The purpose of the book is positive and practical: it deals with the whole range of conduct; and because the 'sons of God' must have a dignity of behaviour which the Tutor alone can impart, it gives directions about common things —eating, dress, entertainments, and the like—with a minuteness which shows how subtle and deep the differences between Pagan and Christian morals were. The *Stromateis* (the word properly means the bundles into which bedclothes were tied up) form a miscellaneous introduction to Christian philosophy; and they were continued in a book called *Outlines*, in which the canonical Scriptures were expounded as the basis of theology.

The work of Clement was of the first importance. He had to justify the faith in the face of the highest culture of the day, at a time when the Gnostics had tried to cheapen it by a compromise with Paganism. His method was singularly bold and liberal. Others chose simply to repudiate both Hellenism and *gnosis*; Clement claimed for Christianity the dignity of the highest wisdom, and dared to depict the Christian as the true 'gnostic.' This man of true knowledge, he said, makes all philosophy his own, because it is the Divine preparation for the Gospel: he uses and studies the world because it leads him to God; in converse with Him, he has such a vision of the Divine that he realises man's highest destiny in becoming a very image of God, sealed by the Word in whom God is made manifest to men.

Origen, A.D. 185-253.—Among Clement's hearers was a boy called *Origen*, an Egyptian by race, but the son of Christian parents. Origen was born about A.D. 185. His father, Leonidas, gave him a double education in secular

and sacred literature. Origen lived and learned from the first with enthusiasm; his father was martyred in 202, and Origen, who would have died with him if his mother had not hid his clothes, was already learned enough to support his family by teaching. When he was eighteen, the bishop Demetrius trusted him to organise the catechetical school, which the persecution had dispersed. Origen's first task was to fortify his pupils during a renewal of the persecution, in which he showed reckless courage. When peace returned, he gave himself to the strenuous life of an ascetic scholar, living, we are told, on sixpence a day, the sum which the sale of his classical manuscripts produced. His first period of work in the catechetical school (203-215) was broken by several journeys: before 212 he carried out his wish to see the most ancient Church of the Romans, and we hear also of his visiting Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine, and Arabia. In 215 Alexandria again became unsafe for Christians, and Origen moved for four years to Cæsarea in Palestine. There his genius was so highly valued that Theoctistus, the local bishop, and Alexander of Jerusalem asked him to preach in church before them. Demetrius of Alexandria, to whom the fame of Origen was not wholly welcome, sent a protest and recalled Origen from Cæsarea. For some twelve years more Origen taught and wrote in Alexandria, aided through the generosity of his friend Ambrosius by a regular staff of scribes and shorthand writers. But towards 230 he was called to Achaia to use his influence in a dogmatic controversy. He paid a visit to Cæsarea on the way, and there his friends Theoctistus and Alexander, mindful of the old dispute, ordained him priest. When his journey was ended, he found Demetrius indignant and hostile. According to the usages of Alexandria, Origen's ordination by bishops of another province was probably irregular; and another grave reason, an act of self-mutilation, which had probably restrained Demetrius from giving him ordination, was now thought serious enough to call for his expulsion from Alexandria and deposition from the priesthood. Origen left Alexandria in 231, and went back to Cæsarea, where his prestige entirely outweighed

the decision of Demetrius and his synods. At Cæsarea he spent the rest of his active life, expounding the Bible to ordinary congregations on Wednesdays and Fridays, educating men in advanced philosophy, and doing strenuous literary work. He exercised at the same time a wide influence on the Church; among the many who sought his advice were the Churchmen of Bostra in Arabia, whose bishop, Beryllus, had adopted a modalist view of the Incarnation. Origen went to Bostra, and both then and on a second occasion was able to change the opinions of his opponents by argument. In the persecutions of 250 and 251, Origen was imprisoned and tortured at Tyre; his health was broken by these sufferings, and in 253 he died, being then sixty-nine years old. His tomb at Tyre was visited and honoured as long as the city stood.

Origen's writings.—Origen left behind him a marvellous amount of Biblical, dogmatic, and apologetic work: of the Biblical work, besides innumerable homilies and commentaries, we may mention the *Hexapla*, which was intended to determine the text of the Old Testament by exhibiting the original Hebrew and the various Greek versions in parallel columns. The great apologetic work *against Celsus* has already been mentioned (p. 68). The most original of his dogmatic works was that *On First Principles*, the earliest systematic attempt at a Christian philosophy of religion: its four books deal with the Being of God and the end of man, with the work of redemption and the destiny of redeemed mankind, with moral law and human responsibility, and with Holy Scripture as the basis of Christian doctrine.

Greek Christianity produced no greater mind than that of Origen, and among the Latins no one but S. Augustine stands on so high a level. That he was without the modern sense of historical perspective, and that, like Clement, he allowed himself a quite illegitimate use of allegorical interpretation, were accidents of the age in which he lived. But in many ways he was singularly modern. Living before the age of dogmatic definition, he thought out the problems of faith and life with a freedom which was impossible in later ages; and since he

was not restricted even by a system of his own making, his many-sidedness made him liable to much misunderstanding. Thus, although Athanasius rightly vindicated his fundamental orthodoxy, he wrote some passages which enabled the Arians to claim him for their party. Bitter controversies raged round his name, especially in the fourth and fifth centuries, and yet there were few of the Greek fathers who did not receive from him, however remotely, the stimulus and the main direction of their thought.

Successors of Origen.—The successors of Origen at Alexandria were faithful to the tradition of their great master: first *Heraclas* (bishop, 233-247), an old friend and colleague of Origen, and then **Dionysius the Great**, who was head of the school from 233 onwards, and bishop from 247 to 265. Dionysius was a man of scholarly and liberal mind. When the region of Arsinoë in Lower Egypt was disturbed by teachers who took the promises of the Apocalypse too literally, Dionysius wrote a book which contained acute critical treatment of the Apocalypse, and handled the millenarians with admirable gentleness. As we should expect, he sided with Cyprian against the rigorist party of Novatian, and with Stephanus in the controversy about re-baptism. He resisted the tendency to ignore heretical literature, preferring to condemn no one unheard. In the Trinitarian controversies of the time, he took a prominent part, as a firm but reasonable opponent of Paul of Samosata. His namesake, Dionysius of Rome, thought that his opposition to Sabellianism was too unguarded, and taxed him with speaking as though there were three separate Gods, but the Alexandrian was able to vindicate his orthodoxy: he had indeed only spoken of three Divine *hypostaseis* or 'Persons,' and this expression was at that time understood in Rome to mean three Divine Natures, so that the difficulty was merely verbal.

After Dionysius the name of *Pierius* deserves mention; for as head of the catechetical school about A.D. 270, he had among his pupils the keen student and defender of Origen, *Pamphilus*, who collected a great library at

Cæsarea, and there carried on the great tradition of textual scholarship which had begun with Origen. In this library the historian *Eusebius*, Pamphilus' intimate friend, found most of his materials; and the work of transcription and correction carried on there by the two friends was of unique service in preserving and propagating one of the earliest types of the text of the New Testament.

CHAPTER IX

CHURCH AND STATE FROM SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS TO CONSTANTINE

The Last Persecutions.—The last epoch of persecution falls into well-marked periods: from 200 to 211 we have the persecution of Septimius Severus, from 250 to 258 those of Decius, Gallus, and Valerian, and from 302-314 that of Diocletian. These three periods were separated by two long intervals of practically unbroken peace.

Septimius Severus, A.D. 192-211.—Commodus was murdered in 192; after a short struggle, the power of the army placed on the throne the first of seven non-Roman emperors, Septimius Severus, an Egyptian. Severus was not ill-disposed to the Church: according to Tertullian, he gave his son Caracalla a Christian nurse, allowed a Christian to anoint him with oil when he was ill, and publicly defended the Church from popular hatred. Yet in Africa at least (as appears from Tertullian's bitter *Apologeticus*, written in 197), in spite of the goodwill of individual magistrates, there was some persecution; and about A.D. 200, the emperor himself tried to put an end to the struggle between Church and State. He issued a novel edict, which renewed an old law against the circumcision of non-Jews, and at the same time forbade the Church to make converts. The special aim of this measure accounts for the sudden dispersion of the Alexandrian catechetical school and the flight of Clement its head; the attack on catechumens and new converts is also illustrated by the beautiful *Acta of Perpetua and Felicitas*, who with four companions suffered martyrdom at Carthage. It is probable that the new edict also stimulated the action of the existing law. In Africa the

Christian burial-places were desecrated, and popular feeling kept the persecution alive till 205 or 206. In the last two years of Severus' reign, 210 and 211, it broke out again, at least in Syria, Cappadocia, Africa, and Alexandria; but with the accession of Caracalla (211-218) it came to an end.

The Long Peace, A.D. 211-250.—The Church had now become too large and influential to be persecuted as a matter of routine; from Severus onwards each of the persecutions had a definite motive and method. The Long Peace (211-250) was favoured also by the religious conditions of the time, which was marked by a strong revival of speculative and religious interests: men became ready to accept any and every creed. The temper of such an age was more ready to compete with the Church than to oppress it. Julia Domna, the wife of Severus, made Philostratus write a life of Apollonius of Tyana, a first-century philosopher; and this life, with its miracles and discourses, was simply modelled on the life of our Lord. The age was at least ready for a moral and monotheistic worship; it is probable that the Church gained largely from this demand, and certainly the religion of Mithras the sun-god became increasingly popular. The emperor **Alexander Severus** (A.D. 222-235) was a typical eclectic: his chapel contained a statue of Christ, together with figures of Orpheus, Hercules, and Abraham, while lesser heroes, such as Achilles and Virgil, were venerated in a smaller room. Philip the Arabian (A.D. 244-249) was even more well-disposed to the Church; by later writers he was reckoned the first Christian emperor.

The only ruler to break this series of tolerant princes was **Maximinus the Thracian** (A.D. 235-238), a mere barbarian despot, who chose to destroy everything that his predecessor and victim had honoured. His reign was a time of great distress in various parts of the Church, as is shown by the exile of **Pontianus** and **Hippolytus** from Rome, the retirement of Origen from Cæsarea, and the abandonment of the Cappadocian church to an 'acerbus et dirus persecutor,' the pro-consul Serenianus.

Progress under the Peace.—With the exception of the

above interval, the forty years of peace were a period of unique opportunities for the Church. They produced great literary results, in the work of Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, and Novatian; and they enabled the Church to obtain some degree of legal recognition as a corporate body. Thus Alexander Severus preferred to adjudge a disputed piece of land across the Tiber to the Christians rather than to the guild of cooks; separate buildings began to be erected for worship, and the Roman Church began to construct and administer catacombs as general places of burial for its members. The earlier catacombs, such as those of Domitilla, were the property of private families: the cemetery which the future bishop Callistus was appointed to manage (*Coemeterium Callisti*) was the first to become the corporate property of the Church.

The Persecution under Decius, A.D. 250-251.—Decius, who came to the throne in 249, was the first emperor of Roman birth since Commodus, and the first of Roman mind since Commodus' father. He set himself a heavy task. The Goths were threatening the north-eastern frontier, and the empire seemed to have lost all stability and cohesion. Decius determined to return to the old Roman ideal, revived the office of *censor morum*, and attempted a moral and religious reform. The religion which he wished to revive was that of the empire; and accordingly he found himself drawn into a war with the Church. An edict, issued late in A.D. 249, required all Christians to offer incense or sacrifice to the imperial gods. Five commissioners in each town were empowered to punish recalcitrants with imprisonment or exile, and their work was followed up by the proconsul, who went round on circuit to enforce submission on pain of torture or death. The object of this policy was to deplete the Church by apostasy, and so to use the stringency of ecclesiastical discipline against the Church itself. The attack fell heavily on the bishops and eminent clergy: **Fabian** of Rome, **Babylas** of Antioch, and **Alexander** of Jerusalem were put to death, while Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Gregory Thaumaturgus of Neo-Cæsarea in Pontus, Maximus of Nola, and Cyprian of Carthage retired before the storm.

The Lapsed Christians.—The letters of Cyprian and Dionysius give copious information of the success of the edict: very large numbers at Alexandria, Rome, and Carthage surrendered their faith, some by offering incense or sacrifice (*thurificati, sacrificati*), and others (*libellatici*) by obtaining official certificates or *libelli* attesting their submission to the edict. Cyprian's letters—the work of a man who was endowed with a combination of spiritual, literary, and practical powers to which the ante-Nicene Church offers no parallel—enable us to follow the complex problems of discipline to which this widespread calamity gave rise. From his place of retirement he had first to stand firm against the presumption of the imprisoned confessors, who ventured to issue certificates of absolution to individual apostates, and even asked the bishops to promulgate their grant of re-admission to all the *lapsi*. Cyprian's firmness led Novatian and the Roman rigorists to hope that he would advocate a merciless treatment of all the lapsed; but Cyprian was a statesman and not an unthinking extremist. He succeeded in staving off the demands of both parties till the summer of A.D. 251, when the Council of Carthage confirmed his practical policy, and decided (1) that each case should be treated separately; (2) that *sacrificati*, if penitent, might hope for restoration in the hour of death; (3) that less culpable apostates, after doing penance, might be restored at once by their bishops; (4) that those who deferred their act of repentance till the hour of death should not be received back then; and (5) that apostasy on the part of clergy involved perpetual exclusion from orders.

Decius was drawn off into Dacia by the Gothic invasion, early in A.D. 251, and there died.

Persecution under Gallus, A.D. 253.—In A.D. 252 many provinces were visited by a pestilence; Numidia also suffered from the incursions of Berbers from the south. Relief had to be organised for the captive Christians whom these nomads had deported; but the plague provided far greater tasks. Cyprian organised a staff of nurses and a burial fund; but this work of charity did not blind the Pagan population to the absence of

Christians from the processions and sacrifices by which the angry gods were approached. Under Gallus, therefore, in A.D. 253, the persecution broke out once more. Cornelius, bishop of Rome, was exiled to Centumcellæ (Civita Vecchia); and at Carthage, so much severity was expected, that a council of forty-two bishops decided to re-admit all penitents to communion, so that the Church might rally its full strength against the enemy.

This short episode was, however, almost trivial in comparison with the **persecution under Valerian, A.D. 253-258.** Valerian made a deliberate effort to annihilate the Church. The early years of his reign gave the Christians both peace and honour; 'the emperor's household,' says Dionysius of Alexandria, 'was a church of God.' But the empire was menaced literally on all sides by barbarian invaders, and the emperor was strongly pressed by his minister, Macrianus, to restore its internal unity by destroying the Church; and in A.D. 257 an edict was put out ordering all bishops, priests, and deacons to do sacrifice on pain of exile, and forbidding all meetings for worship and visits to Christian cemeteries. Dionysius and Cyprian were banished, and a great number of African clergy condemned to the mines. But this first blow was only a preliminary. In A.D. 258 the emperor wrote to the senate, directing the execution of an order (1) that all bishops, priests, and deacons should be put to death; (2) that Christians of senatorial or equestrian rank should lose their status and property, and then, if obstinate, be beheaded; (3) that women of the same position should suffer confiscation and banishment; (4) that members of the imperial household should be sent to work as slaves on the imperial estates. The whole Western Church was heavily afflicted by this pitiless attack: in the East, the pressure of foreign invasion appears to have lessened its effect. **S. Cyprian** was beheaded in September A.D. 258; the Roman bishop **S. Xystus**, with four of his deacons, had been murdered during divine worship a month before, and the young Roman deacon, **S. Lawrence**, had followed them after a few days.

Second Peace of the Church, A.D. 260-303.—In A.D. 260

Valerian was campaigning beyond the Euphrates against the Persians: their king, Sapor, treacherously made him prisoner and put him to death. His son, Gallienus (260-268), an ineffective dilettante, during whose reign nineteen pretenders attempted to become master of the army, issued an edict permitting to Christians the use of their churches. This had the effect of making Christianity a *religio licita*, and gave the Church forty years of peace. The capable but violent ruler Aurelian (268-275) intended to imitate the policy of Decius and Valerian, but died before his plan could be carried out.

Diocletian's Political Reforms, A.D. 284-305.—The accession of Diocletian was a turning-point in Roman history. After a century of military despotism and usurpation, Diocletian created an administrative system and a scheme of succession. He recognised that the empire was now too large, its western half too separate from the eastern, its military needs too wide, to be managed from one centre by one titular head. He therefore divided his burden between four rulers, two of them called *Augustus* and two *Cæsar*. He remained Augustus in the East and head of the whole state, fixing his capital at Nicomedia, and appointed Maximian, an Illyrian soldier, as his colleague in the West. The first eastern Cæsar was Diocletian's son-in-law Galerius; and Constantius Chlorus, the father of Constantine, acted under Maximian. Galerius' head-quarters were at Sirmium in the south of Pannonia; the western Augustus had his capital at Milan, not in Rome, and his Cæsar was stationed at Trèves. The Augusti were bound to retire after twenty years, and the Cæsars were to succeed them. The empire so reconstructed was Roman only in name: the Roman senators had long ceased to be a political force, and the promotion of Milan deprived them of even the semblance of power.

Persecution Edicts of Diocletian, A.D. 303-304.—Diocletian left the Church in peace for nearly twenty years; Christians were numerous at his court, and even his wife and daughter came under instruction for baptism. But a strong court-party of Pagan priests and philosophers was at work on behalf of the old imperial religion. They

were led at court by the prefect Hierocles, and had a far stronger ally in Diocletian's fanatic son-in-law Galerius. The emperor himself was attached at least to the superstitions of the old ritual; and Galerius was able to persuade him in 295 to 'purify' the army by ordering that all soldiers should offer sacrifice. Seven years later the opposition of the emperor to further action was overcome: the oracle of Apollo at Miletus, consulted about the frequency of desertion from the army, replied that 'he could not declare the truth because of the Christians.' The result was a persecution which did not die out entirely before 313. The *first edict* was put in force at the festival of the Terminalia, February 23, 303. It decreed the destruction of all churches and the burning of all sacred books. Further, as a return to the policy of Valerian, it prohibited all Christian meetings, and threatened all who refused to recant with degradation or slavery according to their rank. The aim of this measure was to destroy the Church without bloodshed; but civil disorders in Antioch and elsewhere, together with two outbreaks of fire in the palace at Nicomedia, soon suggested that the Church was organising a seditious resistance. A *second edict* therefore ordered the arrest of all Christian clergy; and a *third*, issued at the Vicennalia of Diocletian in December 303, offered them all their freedom on condition of offering sacrifice; those who refused were to be liable to any kind of torture. The culminating point was reached in 304: Diocletian was then enfeebled by illness, and he was probably not responsible for the murderous *fourth edict*, which required all persons throughout the empire to offer sacrifice, on pain of death and confiscation.

Galerius and Maximinus Daza.—In 305, Diocletian and his colleague Maximian were forced by the terms of the constitution to retire. Galerius became Augustus in the East, Constantius in the West. Galerius found a fitting partner in Maximinus Daza. Constantius died in 306 and was succeeded by Severus; Constantius' son Constantine, who had previously been passed over, now became Cæsar.

For two years the conflict between Church and State had been waged all over the empire, except in Gaul,

where Constantius had ventured to neglect all the edicts but the first, to which he gave nominal effect by pulling down a few churches. From 305 onwards the whole of the west was free from persecution; but Galerius and Daza in the east maintained an intermittent reign of terror till 311. Daza put out a *fifth edict* in 308, ordering the restoration of temples and images, and enforcing sacrifice once more on all his subjects, with the new details that all who sacrificed should eat of what was offered, and that all provisions in the market should be sprinkled with wine or water that had been used in Pagan ritual. The years 303-310 were probably more full of horror for the Christians of the East than any previous period. But the end was near. Galerius had done his worst, and on his death-bed (311) he acknowledged his failure in the strangest proclamation in Roman history. It accused the Christians of deserting the institutions of the ancients, of forming sects, of disloyalty to their own and to all other gods; it announced the failure of all efforts to bring them to a better mind; it proclaimed that Christians might now exist again and establish their meetings so long as they did nothing against public order, and ended by asking their prayers for the State and the emperors.

Even after this order of toleration, Maximinus Daza remained intolerant. We hear of petitions addressed to him from single cities, asking leave to get rid of their Christian population; and along with the foundation of a Pagan Church which imitated the usages and forms of Christianity went the propagation of a villainous travesty of the gospel story, entitled 'the Acts of Pilate,' which was set up in public places and taught in the schools of Syria and Egypt. But Maximinus' time was now short. The title of Augustus was now claimed by four rulers: Constantine in Gaul, Maxentius (the nominee of the Roman senate) in Italy, Maximinus, and Licinius the successor of Galerius. Constantine and Licinius combined against the other two: Maxentius was crushed by Constantine at the Milvian bridge, close to Rome, on October 28, 312, and Licinius disposed of Maximinus in 313.

Edict of Milan, A.D. 313.—These victories put a final end to persecution. Constantine issued at Milan in 313 an edict which assured toleration to all forms of religion, and restored all the corporate property of the Church. Licinius completed the formal reconciliation of Church and State by issuing a similar order in the East.

It is obvious that these later persecutions were increasingly well directed. As the Church came out into the world, its vulnerable points were more easily seen. Severus tried to check its growth by attacking new converts; Decius attacked the clergy; Valerian banished them in order to weaken the laity; and Diocletian combined with this (1) the demolition of the churches which Gallienus' policy had encouraged the Christians to build, and (2) the destruction of the Scriptures. Violence was thus done to every visible instrument of the Church's life.

The 'Traditores.'—The effects of the wholesale burning of sacred books are felt even now: no extant Biblical manuscript is earlier than the reign of Constantine. As an episode in persecution, this device caused serious trouble in the Church. Forty years of peace had once again multiplied the number of unheroic and nominal Christians, who 'in time of persecution fell away.' A special question of discipline arose from the new offence of giving up sacred books or vessels to be burned. Those who took this easy path towards safety were called *traditores*, and it was disputed whether the same stigma was deserved by men who appeased their persecutors by giving up heretical or non-canonical books.

The Donatists, A.D. 311.—In Africa, as was to be expected, a rigorist party was soon formed, which asserted that a *traditor* could not be a member of the true Church nor perform valid acts as a priest or bishop. This was a revival of the old fanatic spirit which could not tolerate wisdom during persecution nor mercy afterwards. At Carthage this led to open schism. The party which was adverse to the clemency of the bishop Mensurius and his successor Cæcilian asserted that Cæcilian had been unjust to the more zealous confessors, and that he was not a true bishop, because Felix of Aptunga, who consecrated

him, was a *traditor*. In A.D. 311 they set up an opposition bishop, Majorinus. From Donatus, who succeeded Majorinus in A.D. 315, this sect came to be known as *Donatists*. The African Church was distracted by this faction, and Constantine, intervening on behalf of public order, took action against it as a champion of Catholicism. The decision of a synod, held by his order at Rome in October A.D. 313, did not prevent the Donatists from appealing to a council of all the bishops of the West. Some four hundred bishops met at Arles in A.D. 314, among them those of York, London, and Lincoln, and, while reaffirming the innocence of Cæcilian, agreed that any of the clergy whom the *acta publica* of an official might prove to be a *traditor*, should be degraded. A further appeal to Constantine resulted two years later in a violent attack on the Donatists, who were banished and excluded from their churches. Thus, before the State had been four years at peace with the Church, the civil power presumed to fight the battles of orthodoxy. Constantine's aim was simply the repression of disorder; but by making martyrs of the Donatists he did bad service to the Church, and gave such a stimulus to Donatism that it affected the African Church for more than a century, and only the commanding genius of Augustine, combined with stringent measures of persecution, availed to crush it into insignificance.

CHAPTER X

THE COUNCIL OF NICÆA

Growing supremacy of Constantine, A.D. 314-324.—The alliance between Constantine and Licinius was soon dissolved by mutual jealousy and suspicion. In 314 it was broken by open war. Constantine was content to prove his superior strength and renew the compact; but Licinius, who had never been a friend to toleration, began to persecute the Church once more in 319. Constantine could not allow the unity of the empire to be menaced by a policy so alien from his own; he therefore prepared for a decisive conflict, defeated Licinius in 323, and put him to death in 324.

The rise of Arianism, A.D. 318.—As soon as his supremacy was assured, Constantine found that a doctrinal controversy was dividing the Eastern Church into factions. The Alexandrian presbyter Arius had in 318 accused his bishop Alexander of heresy. Alexander had publicly emphasised, in opposition to Arius, the essential unity and co-equal glory of the Son and the Father. Arius had inherited from his teacher, Lucian of Antioch, and now developed, a different interpretation of the words 'Son of God.' He asserted that a 'son' means one who derives his being from a father, but did not exist before his father gave him being. Therefore if the Son of God is a true Son, there must have been a time when he did not exist. The Father must have created Him out of non-existence; and although we worship Him as unique among created beings, yet He is a creature, and not 'truly God' in the sense in which the Father is 'truly God.'

The antecedents of Arianism.—This doctrine, propagated by skilful logic and backed by the popularity of the dignified ascetic Arius, was not absolutely new. The

Church had worshipped our Lord as God from the beginning; but as soon as men began to think out their religion and express it in a theology, the question arose, How can belief in the Divinity of Christ be harmonised with belief in the Unity of God? Broadly speaking, there were two main types of answer. On the one hand stood the true inheritors of the theology of S. John, the apologists, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Origen, who asserted that there are essential and eternal distinctions within the Godhead. They believed that the Word was eternally God, at one with the Father, and deriving His Divinity from the Father. These writers use many metaphors to picture the idea of derivation without division. As a ray of light comes from the sun but is not separated from it, or as a stream from a spring, or a branch from a root, so the Son is from the Father and yet at one with Him. Unfortunately some of the apologists, and Origen himself, were not always clear and consistent. They laid such stress upon the fact that the Divinity of the Son is derived from that of the Father, that they sometimes exaggerated the subordination of the Son to the Father.

On the other side, there were thinkers whose theology was far less Scriptural. They believed that the undivided sovereignty of God the Father was to be maintained, even at the risk of denying the true Divinity of the Son. These Monarchians were of two types. The first, represented by Sabellius, taught that the Father, Son, and Spirit are only three aspects of the One God. The second, represented by Paul of Samosata, held that the impersonal Reason or Word of God which inspired the prophets had also inspired Jesus Christ, only in a higher measure. He had thus attained such a perfection of holiness that He was *adopted* by God, and might be called—what essentially He was not—Son of God. This 'Adoptionist' Monarchianism was taken up by Lucian of Antioch, who himself taught Arius.

Now the teaching of Arius, though new in form, drew its main elements from two opposed types of previous thought. His radical principle came from the Adoptionist Monarchians; for his idea of God, like theirs,

was the pagan idea of a being infinitely remote from the created world. But the machinery by which this idea was worked out came from the workshop of Origen. Origen had emphasised the 'subordination' of the Eternal Son; Arius used the idea of subordination in order to show that the Son is not eternal. Origen had spoken of the Father as ὁ θεὸς, and of the Son as θεὸς; Arius removed the subtlety of the distinction and denied that the Son is 'truly God.'

The struggle against Arianism.—Arius soon found considerable support in his opposition to Alexander among theologians, because he posed as their defender against Sabellianism; among common Christians, because his explanation of the term 'Son' appealed to common-sense; and among recent converts from paganism, because his conception of Christ as a kind of demi-god was in fact a Christian paganism. Through a doctrinal poem called *Thalia* and a series of songs, which Arius wrote 'for sailors, wayfarers, and millers,' the Arian catchwords found their way into common speech. In A.D. 321 Alexander followed up his personal remonstrances by summoning a synod of Egyptian and Libyan bishops, which deposed Arius and his clerical friends, among whom were Secundus and Theonas, two bishops from Libya. But Arius had other supporters, notably his fellow-pupil Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia; and after his deposition he left Alexandria for Palestine, where Eusebius of Cæsarea (the historian) was not without sympathy for his views. While Arius was visiting the two Eusebii, Alexander was sending letters far and wide to warn the Church against him. Eusebius of Nicomedia replied by a similar series, which was backed by a synod held in the imperial city. The Church was now a babel of controversy; and at Alexandria, in A.D. 322, a schism was started by one Colluthus, an anti-Arian presbyter, who thought Alexander's policy culpably weak. Alexander's best ally was the young deacon Athanasius, who had already written 'on the Incarnation of God the Word,' and now apparently put together a vigorous account of the synod of A.D. 321 for general circulation.

Constantine interferes, A.D. 324.—At the beginning of

A.D. 324 the emperor thought fit to intervene, prompted by the same motive which had led him to combat the Donatists—the fear lest a divided Church should become a menace to the unity of his empire. Constantine was not a Christian. He had inherited from his father a belief in one god, namely the sun-god Mithras, whose token appeared on his coinage till about A.D. 317. As a monotheist, he could defend, patronise, and enrich the Church; but neither the creed nor the morality of Christians appealed to him with any convincing force. The man who stamped out the dynasty of Licinius by the murder of the young Licinianus, and had his own eldest son Crispus and wife Fausta put to death; who retained the title of Pontifex Maximus, and ordered soothsayers to be consulted when public buildings were struck by lightning, was hardly a Christian by conviction. It is true that he gravitated towards the Church, and that his anti-pagan legislation grew more and more stringent. But his first personal act of adherence to the faith was not made till A.D. 337, when he was baptized as a dying man.

The proposed Church Council. — Naturally enough, Constantine saw nothing in the Arian controversy but a trivial difference about words. His first act was to send Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, to Alexandria to see that peace was restored between disputants who really agreed, as he thought, on all essential points. Hosius returned so strongly anti-Arian that the emperor began to see the magnitude of the dispute. Determined to bring it to an end, he summoned the bishops of the whole Church to meet in council at Nicæa in Bithynia.

The origin of Church Councils. — The institution of episcopal synods was now about a century and a half old. The question of Montanism and the controversy about Easter were the earliest occasions which made a federation of this kind necessary. The need for common action recurred so often that it was soon provided for by a synodal system. Thus Tertullian speaks of synods regularly held in Greece; and in the middle of the third century, Firmilian of Cappadocia says that there they were held every year. The organisation of these local assemblies made it necessary to determine the centre to

which each bishop should refer his difficulties. At the first this was always settled by local convenience: thus the Paschal question was discussed by the bishops of Cæsarea and Jerusalem with those of Tyre and Ptolemais; and as late as the middle of the third century, we find the bishop of Iconium acting with those of Cappadocia, Galatia, and Cilicia. But a natural tendency soon began to assimilate the ecclesiastical to the civil divisions of the empire; and by the time of the Nicene Council, the civil metropolis of each province was in nearly all cases its ecclesiastical metropolis also.

The disciplinary questions arising out of the persecution had already led to several important councils: the Spanish bishops had met at Elvira in A.D. 305, those of Asia Minor and Syria at Ancyra in A.D. 314 and at Neo-Cæsarea a year or two later, and the emperor had summoned a general council of western bishops to Arles in A.D. 314. But the Nicene Council was a new departure: it was intended to represent the whole Church, and although not more than six western sees are known to have been represented, it probably did represent the whole area which the dogmatic dispute had affected. The traditional number of bishops present is 318: there were certainly more than 250.

The Council of Nicæa, A.D. 325.—The council was summoned for June 19, 325. After some preliminary meetings in the cathedral church, the formal session was opened by the emperor in the palace. He appeared in royal splendour, was welcomed by Eusebius of Cæsarea in a courtly speech, replied in Latin, and then left the council to its work, probably under the presidency of Eustathius, Bishop of Antioch. The sessions lasted till the 25th of August. The twenty canons which were passed decided some minor points of precedence, discipline, and usage: for instance, the sixth secured to the bishop of Alexandria his traditional jurisdiction over the Churches of Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, as being parallel to the large Italian jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome. The council also decreed that Easter should always be kept on the Sunday following the next full moon after the 21st of March, and offered a liberal com-

promise to the followers of one Meletius, an Egyptian bishop who had organised a schism like that of the Donatists. But the main concern of the session was with the Arian controversy; and here a result was reached which few members of the council could have foreseen.

The proposed creed.—The majority of the council were doubtless prepared for a compromise. They were not Arians; and when **Eusebius of Nicomedia** asked them to accept an Arian statement of belief they rejected him with indignation. Yet they were not of Athanasius' mind, and they would have preferred to endorse some simple formula by which the Divinity of Christ might be guarded without an express condemnation of Arianism. The leader of this pacific majority, **Eusebius of Cæsarea**, came forward with a formula which seemed likely to accomplish this—the baptismal creed of his own church of Cæsarea.

The origin of creeds.—Baptism had from the earliest age been accompanied by a confession of faith. The oral delivery of this creed or 'password' to the catechumen, and the recitation by which he owned his belief in it [illegible] formed the last stage in his preparation. The varying 'symbols' used by different [illegible] were all based on the baptismal formula of S. Matthew xxviii. 19; but from the second century onwards there was a constant tendency to adapt and expand the form of creed so as to guard against heretical misconceptions. Thus the influence of Gnosticism on the old Roman creed (the ancestor of our 'Apostles' creed') was traceable in the phrases '*one* God' and 'maker of heaven and earth.' In the east, the pressure of controversy led to a fuller expansion of disputed clauses.

The creed of Eusebius of Cæsarea.—The creed which Eusebius presented to the Nicene Council was of this expanded character, and ran as follows: 'We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, both visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, God of (from) God, Light of Light, Life of Life, the only-begotten Son, the first-born of all creation, begotten of the Father before all ages, through whom also all things were made; who for our salvation

was made flesh and lived among men, and suffered, and rose again the third day, and ascended to the Father, and shall come again in glory, to judge the living and dead; and in the Holy Spirit.'

The creed revised.—If this creed had been accepted as it stood, the council would have met in vain: there was no clause in it which all parties could not in some sense accept. Athanasius and his party, convinced that vital questions were at stake, determined that the council should pronounce on a definite issue. They therefore stood out for the acceptance of the creed in a revised form, and the insertion of phrases which the Arians could not evade. The debate turned on the insertion of one famous word, *homoousion*. An Arian might hold that the Son is *of like essence* (*homoiousios*) with the Father: to confess Him *of one essence* with the Father was to assert that He shares with Him that which no created being, however exalted, could share. Both at the council and in later disputes the word *homoousion* was keenly opposed, and that chiefly on two grounds: (1) that it was not Scriptural; (2) that a synod of Antioch in A.D. 269 had condemned its use by Paul of Samosata. The defence in later days (for the debate at Nicæa is not recorded) was that it expressed the mind of Scripture, and that Paul of Samosata had used it in an obviously heretical sense. The debate in the end forced the middle party to choose between a virtual acquittal of Arius and the ratification of a creed which they suspected and disliked. They chose the latter alternative: the revised form of the Cæsarean creed asserted that the Son of God is 'only-begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father'—'begotten, not made, being of one essence (*homoousion*) with the Father'; and at the end the following abjuration was added: 'But those who say that "there was once a time when He was not," and "before He was begotten He was not," and "He was made of things that were not," or maintain that the Son of God is of a different essence (from the Father), or is a created being, or liable to (moral) change,—these the Catholic and Apostolic Church declares to be anathema.'

The defeat of Arianism.—Arius' two friends, Secundus

and Theonas, refused to sign this creed. Eusebius of Cæsarea had grave scruples, as his almost apologetic letter to his people shows; in the end he submitted to explanations, and signed. The emperor's policy had succeeded so far: the Church had spoken its mind, and Constantine enforced its decision by sending Arius, Secundus, and Theonas into exile. Three causes contributed to the decision of Nicæa: the will of the emperor, who desired a definite result for the sake of peace; the readiness of the moderates to suppress the extreme Arians at any cost; and the strong conviction of Athanasius and his few followers, who knew that the *homoousion* was the only possible safeguard for the apostolic faith. But Athanasius was ahead of his age, and was destined to suffer persecution and repeated exile for his convictions; for the moderates were soon carried away by a strong Arian reaction, and the emperor was always prepared to oppress what seemed to be the losing side.

The Church and the world. — With the year A.D. 325 our period ends; yet it is in hardly any sense the end of an epoch. The first age of the Church ended with the edict of Milan. Christianity then exchanged the mingled good and evil of persecution for the dangerous privilege of imperial support; and under the new conditions every department of Church life took a new start. The churches which Diocletian had destroyed were restored with new splendour by Constantine, and art in all its forms began to be employed for the enrichment of worship. As the Church came out openly into the world, a natural reaction created the monastic movement; it seemed a 'counsel of perfection' to leave a life in which it was hard to be unworldly. The intellectual life of the Church also underwent a change: doctrinal disputes became more subtle and more technical in themselves, and more closely involved with secular interests. Arianism and the Nicene Council belong wholly to this second period, in which doctrinal development was no longer an entirely spontaneous movement of thought, but was guided by the decisions of Church councils, and complicated by its new relation to imperial politics.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHURCH CALENDAR

The Christian Calendar is an enduring monument of the Jewish origin of the Church. It has three elements: (1) The division of the year into weeks, with special observances attached to certain days in each week; (2) the movable feast of Easter, with other days of observance dependent upon it; and (3) the fixed annual commemorations of persons or events. The third of these has its analogies in such Jewish festivals as Purim; the other two are directly derived from Jewish usages which the Church took over and adopted from the first.

The Christian Week.—The Jewish law required the observance of the seventh day (from Friday evening till Saturday at sunset) as a religious festival and a time of unbroken rest. Custom also added religious significance to the second and fifth days (Monday and Thursday) as days of fasting. The Christian week preserved an exactly similar outline, with two differences of detail; the Lord's Day soon came, through the influence of the Gentile Churches, to supplant the Sabbath; and the weekly fasts were moved to Wednesday and Friday.

The Observance of the Lord's Day.—During our period there was no confusion between the Lord's Day and the Sabbath. The Christian Sunday was a memorial of the Resurrection—a weekly Easter, prescribed by Church usage only, and in no way related to the fourth commandment. Tertullian is the first writer who refers to abstention from work on the Lord's Day. In his day it was already usual to mark the festal character of Sunday by standing during prayer, a custom which was made obligatory by the Nicene Council. Tertullian says that

there are some who cause scandal by standing to pray on the Sabbath also; 'but we ought, as tradition teaches, to refrain from kneeling on the Lord's Day alone, and not from kneeling only, but also from all anxious occupations, postponing even our business, that we may give no opportunity to the devil.' Early writers are not silent as to the Decalogue, but they never hint that the keeping of Sunday fulfils the Jewish ceremonial law. They maintain the Divine origin of that law as against the Gnostics and Marcionites, but they never single out any part of it as still retaining its literal force. Thus their attitude to the Sabbath is the same as their attitude to circumcision; the Church, they say, knows only the spiritual circumcision of the heart and the spiritual Sabbath. This spiritual Sabbath is, however, not the Christian Lord's Day; it is not a day at all, but a perpetual Sabbath, a 'rest for the people of God,' a rest which comes from the consecration of every day to Him.

Legislation of Constantine.—At the end of our period a new development began. Constantine issued an edict in A.D. 321 ordering that the 'venerable day of the Sun' should be kept as a civil holiday, marked by the suspension of all business. A special exemption was granted to farmers, to whom the omission of a Sunday's work might mean serious loss. It is probable that the motive of this measure, as of Constantine's policy in general, was not purely or primarily Christian. The expression 'day of the Sun' reminds us of the Emperor's early devotion to the sun-god Mithras. But it seems that as Constantine became more nearly attached to the Church, a series of minor edicts made it plain that he wished to present the Church as such with a day of rest; according to Eusebius he also made provision for the observance of Friday. The new law became far more stringent under Constantine's successors; and although some Church councils withstood the growth of Judaistic ideas, the legal enforcement of Sunday rest gave such prominence to this one aspect of the Lord's Day that Churchmen drifted by association into more 'Sabbatarian' views. Thus it is from fourth century writers that we first hear

of Sunday as substituted for the Sabbath by Christ's institution, or of the weekly rest as an obligation handed on to the Church from the Mosaic law.

Sunday Worship.—Although the persecution of Diocletian by destroying Christian service-books did much to obliterate the early history of liturgies, yet the surviving evidence enables us to trace at least the outlines of ante-Nicene worship, and shows that in all essentials it was identical with the developed liturgy of the fourth century. Thus in **Justin Martyr** (*First Apology*, 65-67) we have a description of the services in use in the middle of the second century. The Church met, we are told, on Sunday; its service, which consisted of two parts, began with the reading of 'the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets,' followed by a homily from the 'president'[1] and a prayer. Next, bread and wine and water were brought: over these the president offered prayers and thanksgivings, to which the people answered *Amen*; all who were present then received the bread and wine as 'the flesh and blood of that Jesus Who was made flesh,' and a portion of the Eucharist (Justin uses the name) was taken by the deacons to those who were absent. The president also received the offerings of the Church on behalf of all who were in need. Justin speaks of this service of 'prayers and thanksgiving' as the Christian 'sacrifice' by which the Jewish sacrifices are superseded. The outline given by him can be supplemented from the **Canons of Hippolytus**, a document probably sent to Hippolytus by Dionysius of Alexandria early in the third century. In these we find the earliest trace of a special dress for ministrants: 'When the bishop wishes to partake of the mysteries, let the deacons and presbyters be assembled with him, clad in white garments more beautiful than those of the people, and splendid if possible (but good works are better than any clothing). let the readers also have festal vestments.' The Eucharist still has two parts, one accessible to catechumens, the other reserved for the faithful or baptized: it begins with the readings from Scripture and a sermon,

[1] Justin uses the word 'president' rather than 'bishop' in order to be understood by heathen readers.

and the 'mass of the faithful' includes the kiss of peace (mentioned in Justin), the bringing of the oblations by the deacon to the bishop, who 'with the presbyters' offers them, and the offering of firstfruits of the earth at certain seasons. In this service we also find the responses, 'The Lord be with you—And with thy spirit: Lift up your hearts—We have lifted them up unto the Lord: Let us give thanks unto the Lord—It is meet and right.' The form of words used in giving the holy sacrament to the communicants was, 'This is the Body of Christ'—'This is the Blood of Christ.' To each the communicant replied *Amen*.

The Fasts of Wednesday and Friday.—That the observance of two weekly fasts was a very early usage is shown by the *Didachè*, where we find the injunction: 'Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites (*i.e.* the Jews), for they fast on the second and the fifth day of the week; but do ye fast on the fourth day and on the preparation.' Another trace of the custom is found in the *Shepherd* of Hermas, where the military name 'station,' *i.e.* 'mounting guard,' is first applied to the fast. The angel finds Hermas keeping a 'station,' and shows him that the observance is in itself vain, unless it is accompanied by the inward discipline of a pure heart; he also recommends him to spend in almsgiving whatever his fasting diet of bread and water may enable him to save. The meaning of the Friday fast and its relation to the Sunday festival are obvious, but the special prominence given to Wednesday is hard to understand. It was commonly said (*e.g.* by S. Augustine) that this fast commemorated the planning of our Lord's betrayal.

At the beginning of the third century it was customary to fast on these days till three in the afternoon; the fast was ended in some places (though not at Rome or Alexandria) by a celebration of the Eucharist. The Montanists wished to increase the rigour of this usage; they prolonged the fast into the evening, and regarded it as a matter of compulsory discipline, enjoined by the new revelations of the Paraclete.

The Christian Year—Easter.—To the first Christians the yearly recurrence of the Passover must have brought

vivid memories of all that had happened at the Passover of A.D. 29. These associations soon gave a Christian meaning to the very word *Pascha*. 'Christ our *Pascha* is sacrificed for us,' wrote S. Paul; and the Sacrifice and Resurrection, remembered at first, perhaps, together with the night of the Exodus, soon became the chief and only reason for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The keeping of Easter must have been universal at a very early date; the Jewish associations of its origin seem not to have interfered with its perpetuation among Gentile Christians. In one chief point, indeed, the usage of the Church made a complete departure from its Judaic prototype; the Jewish Paschal meal was the beginning of a fast; the Christian *Pascha* included and culminated in the festival of the Resurrection, which was followed by a festal period lasting till Pentecost.

The Paschal Controversy.—In the middle of the second century, when communication between distant Churches was constant, it was noticed that the Churches of proconsular Asia differed from all others in their observance of Easter. The general rule was that the Crucifixion should be commemorated on a Friday, and the Resurrection on the following Sunday; the Friday chosen was that which followed the 14th of Nisan in the Jewish Calendar. In Asia, on the other hand, the Crucifixion and Resurrection were commemorated together on Nisan 14th, whatever day of the week that might happen to be. This difference of usage was discussed by Polycarp and Anicetus at Rome in A.D. 154. Neither would consent to give up the ancient tradition of his Church, but the friendship of the two bishops remained undisturbed. Not long after A.D. 160 a new divergence appeared: some Asiatics, holding that our Lord ate the Passover on the night of His betrayal, urged that the Church ought still to observe that feast with Jewish rites. This view was combated by such eminent men as Melito and Apollinaris, both of whom were 'Quarto-decimans' (*i.e.* 'observers of the 14th day'), as also by Clement of Alexandria, who disagreed with them in that. Perhaps it was the introduction of the new Judaising usage into Rome by Blastus that led the Roman bishop Victor

to intervene. Victor wished the whole question to be set at rest: on his suggestion synods were called in Asia, Palestine, Pontus and Gaul, as well as in Rome. The Asiatic use was everywhere condemned; and although Victor's attempt to excommunicate the recalcitrant Asiatics was a false step, it is probable that from this time onwards the custom of keeping Easter on a Sunday became practically universal.

A second Paschal controversy was settled by the Council of Nicæa. The most important point in this controversy was that the Church of Antioch followed the Jews in keeping the Paschal feast on Nisan 14, provided the day was a Sunday. The Council condemned this as 'too Jewish,' and determined that the feast should be kept everywhere on the same day as at Rome and Alexandria (see above, p. 122).

Lent.—At the Council of Nicæa we first hear the expression τεσσαρακοστή (=*quadragesima*) applied to the period preceding Easter. These forty days were then understood to be a kind of penitential period, having special relation to the preparation of catechumens for baptism and of penitents for restoration: as applied to a period of continuous fasting the word is not so old. Some kind of fast certainly preceded Easter in the second century; but the usage of the Montanists, who fasted during two separate weeks, except on Saturday and Sunday, seems to have been thought exceptionally rigorous. Irenæus, indeed, deprecates Victor's insistence on unity of observance for the express reason that the Lenten fast was quite indeterminate. 'Some,' he says, 'fast for one day, others for two days, others for several, while some keep a continuous fast of forty hours, day and night.' This last custom seems to have been widely diffused; the forty hours represented 'the days in which the bridegroom was taken away,' that is, the period between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.

The Epiphany.—A Roman calendar of the year A.D. 336 gives the 25th of December as the day on which the Nativity of our Lord was celebrated. But the observance of Christmas as a separate festival was purely western in origin, and it cannot be definitely traced before the

fourth century. The eastern Church had, however, an older festival, that of the 'Epiphanies' or Manifestations of our Lord, which was kept on January 6th. This feast commemorated (1) the Nativity, (2) the Adoration of the Magi, (3) the Baptism, and (4) the miracle in Cana of Galilee. It was as unknown to the west, at least till the middle of the fourth century, as was that of the Nativity alone in the east. After that time both festivals become observed in both parts of the Church.

The original motive for the choice of these two dates is obscure. The festal observance of December 25, to which the Nativity was assigned by Hippolytus (about A.D. 220), was probably not quite unconnected with the Pagan festival of the winter solstice, which fell, according to the Roman Calendar, on that day. But M. Duchesne has made it still more likely that both dates are derived from calculations of the day of the Crucifixion, combined with the assumption that the period between the Annunciation and our Lord's death must have filled a complete number of years. The western date for the Annunciation is March 25: this was also Hippolytus' date for the Crucifixion. There are also traces of an eastern selection of April 6 for the Crucifixion. The intervals between March 25—December 25 and April 6—January 6, are exactly the same; and it seems probable that they had their origin in two different applications of one rather fanciful idea.

Saints' Days.—This third element of the Calendar grew from the early practice of commemorating the death of martyrs every year on the day on which they had suffered. Thus the Smyrnæans, whose letter relates the martyrdom of Polycarp (A.D. 156), express the hope that the Lord will permit them to celebrate the 'birthday' of their bishop at his tomb; and a century later, the arrest of other martyrs is dated as occurring 'while they were keeping the true birthday of Polycarp.' Every Church had its own list of such commemorations; and by a natural process of assimilation the most eminent names, such as those of Cyprian at Carthage, and Laurence and Xystus at Rome, soon acquired more than local veneration.

As early as A.D. 200, the Eucharist was offered on these days of remembrance. Thus Tertullian says, 'We make oblations for the dead every year in memory of their "birthdays."' A little later, Cyprian mentions the reading of honoured names at the Eucharist, a custom which was in later times a definite part of the service; both the living and the dead were commemorated in the reading of the tablets (*diptychs*), and thus the great names of the Church had a perpetual as well as an annual remembrance.

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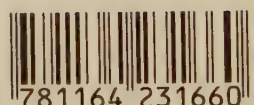

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